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LITTLE PRUDY'S
FLY AWAY SERIES
MISS THISTLEDOWN
ILLUSTRATED
LEE & SHEPARD, BOSTON

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LITTLE PRUDY'S FLYAWAY SERIES.

MISS THISTLEDOWN.

BY

SOPHIE MAY, (pseud)

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE PRUDY STORIES," "DOTTY DIMPLE STORIES," "THE DOCTOR'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

Rebecca Sophie Clarke.

ILLUSTRATED.

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DEDICATION.

TO MY LITTLE FRIEND

IDA C. FOSS,

AND MY LITTLE NIECE

REBECCA CLARKE LINDSAY.

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LITTLE PRUDY'S FLYAWAY SERIES.

COMPLETE IN SIX VOLUMES.

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1. LITTLE FOLKS ASTRAY.
2. PRUDY KEEPING HOUSE
3. AUNT MADGE'S STORY.
4. LITTLE GRANDMOTHER.
5. LITTLE GRANDFATHER.
6. MISS THISTLEDOWN.

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MISS THISTLEDOWN.

CHAPTER I.

FLY'S HEART.

MRS. CLIFFORD was sitting in the nursery, with the window open into the greenhouse, making button-holes in a blue cambric frock. There was a canary bird swinging in a gilded cage right over an orange tree; there was a "zebra cat" sleeping on an ottoman; and just then Horace came into the room, followed by a pretty black spaniel. Horace whistled, the canary bird sang, the zebra cat purred, and the black dog laughed by wagging his tail. Mrs. Clifford looked up and smiled.

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"It is very pleasant here," she thought; "sunshine, and flowers, and music. God has given me so many beautiful things, that I am almost afraid I shall be too happy. If it were not for — Hark! what is that?"

There was a shrill sound of crying; it came nearer and nearer, and with it the patter of quick feet.

"Why, that is Katie," said Mrs. Clifford, looking troubled. "Go, Horace, and see what has happened."

By that time the little feet were at the door, a flushed face looked in, and a pair of pouting lips sobbed out, —

"Do you wonder I couldn't go to school, mamma, when Mamie Hallock — she was so *stinchy* to me — wouldn't give me but one bite o' taffy; poked me down, too?"

Mrs. Clifford did not say one word.

"Do you wonder?" went on Katie, flying

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round and round. "*Course* I couldn't go to school with such a *stinchy* girl 's that. Poked me down; most tore my dress; and O, I've got the toothache in the back of my neck."

Mrs. Clifford dropped the blue cambric frock into her work-basket, and sighed. Katie went to the closet, and hung up her cloak and hood, every now and then peeping out at her mother from under her eyelashes, to see what was to be done about it.

"You need not put them away," said Mrs. Clifford. "If Mamie Hallock has gone to school, you can go without her."

Katie rolled herself into a little ball of anguish, and moaned at her mother's feet.

"O, mamma, there's a great big pig barkin' all up to the school-house, every step, he is."

"My little girl isn't afraid of pigs?"

"Yes, mamma; Mrs. Hallock's little Ma-

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mie isn't 'fraid, 'cause she's big; reads in a long class; but I'm *drefful* 'fraid. And Mamie had a piece of taffy had meat-nuts in; wouldn't only let me bi-ite!"

Katie's tears ran in small streams, and, as she tried to wipe them away, they turned to sweetened water, for her tiny hands were sticky with molasses.

"It is certain that she has had a bite of taffy, and a big one, too," thought her mother, smiling.

"And now, brother Horace, are you willing to go to school with this little girl who is afraid of pigs?"

"To be sure I am," answered Horace, taking the slender creature in his arms lovingly. "Pick your hat and cloak off the nail, Miss Topknot, and away we go."

"And bring Katinka a paper of yeast cakes from the store as you come back, my son."

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"I don't know what I should do without my big brother Hollis," said Fly, as she rode away on his shoulder, followed by the admiring spaniel.

"Mamie Hallock hasn't any big brother," said Horace; "aren't you sorry for her?"

Katie's face clouded again.

"But Mamie's got a nice *steb-mamma;* gives her candy, bushels and bushels of candy. O, dear!" cried she, with a sudden outburst. "I'm drefful tired; some days Hollis and I feel jus' like fretting."

"Yes, but Topknot mustn't fret, for it snarls her face all up, and then, if the cold catches it and freezes it — O, my!" He made such a comical grimace, as he spoke, that Fly laughed outright. "And besides, when Topknot frets, we can't love her."

"O, ho!" exclaimed she, in high glee; "yes, you do love me, too; you love me

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every time I fret, Hollis Clifford, every single which time."

The fond brother only answered by a kiss; for the little witch had told the truth, and he could not deny it.

After leaving her at school, and begging the teacher not to give her what she called a *misredeemer* mark, Horace went home, looking rather thoughtful.

"Mother," said he, "did you ever know Katie to be so cross? It doesn't seem like her. She is always complaining of toothache somewhere, — in her head, or her back, or her stomach; and then how fast her little heart beats! It fairly frightens me."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Clifford, uneasily; "your father and I have been talking about it lately, and wondering whether it is best to take her out of school. I think I shall see Dr. De Bruler to-morrow, and ask his advice."

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That night Fly came home flushed and tired.

"Mamma, take your darling child," said she, creeping into her mother's lap, and laying her head on her bosom.

She seemed so languid that Mrs. Clifford thought she would wait no longer, but send for Dr. De Bruler at once.

"Not that our little girl is ill," said she to the kind doctor, when he came, "only we would like to know whether she ought to go to school or not."

Dr. De Bruler might have said "No" at once; but that is not the way with physicians; they always ask questions before giving any advice.

"Will you come and sit on my knee, my dear?" said he.

Katie went willingly, being fond of him, and not at all afraid of his "medderson,"

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which looked and tasted like dots of white sugar.

"Let me see; what is your name?" asked the doctor, pretending he had forgotten.

"My long name is Katie," answered the child, gravely, and my short name is Thistledown Flyaway."

"Ah, yes, now I remember; and sometimes Topknot. And have you planted any mice lately?"

Flyaway looked puzzled, and did not understand. Once, Katinka, the German girl in the kitchen, found a wee, wee mouse, and Fly planted it in the garden, with a handful of corn, to keep it from starving. She expected plenty of little mice would spring up; but nothing came except narrow, green blades of corn, and the mouse always staid just where he had been put.

The doctor saw she did not recollect anything about it.

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"And so you go to school, Miss Flyaway Thistledown Topknot? Do you whisper at school?"

Fly blushed, and hung her head.

"Mamie Hallock whispers *orfly*."

"Ah, indeed! And what about Miss Thistledown Flyaway?"

Fly turned her head as far around as it would go without breaking her neck, and answered, with her fingers in her mouth, —

"Some!"

The doctor could not help laughing.

"And do you sit still long enough to learn to read, Miss Thistledown?"

"No, sir; the teacher won't let me learn. She keeps us saying it over: 'The-dawg-has-the-pig-by-the-ear. The-dawg-has-the-pig-by-the-ear.' That's all."

"Let me hear you spell dog."

"Dawg," repeated Flyaway, blushing

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again, and hanging her head. "The teacher doesn't put out 'dawg.' She says, 'Somebody may spell "*the*," and *the* is all the word she puts out.'"

"Indeed! I hardly think study is hurting this little brain," said he, patting Flyaway's soft hair. "Is the school-room pretty warm, my dear?"

"Yes, sir; it's all *hotted up*."

The doctor did not say any more for as much as a minute; he was holding his ear close to Fly's left side, to hear her heart beat, and she thought he was doing it for play.

"Why, doctor," said Mrs. Clifford, nervously, "there isn't anything wrong with her heart, I hope."

"Isn't there something wrong with everybody's heart? What does the Bible tell us?" replied the doctor, who was not ready to answer Mrs. Clifford's question.

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"My heart ticks real quick," said Fly. "It beats Hollis's all to *nuffin.*"

"I believe you, Miss Thistledown. It goes almost as fast as your little hands and feet. But if you were taken out of school, and sent to Maine next summer, it would not tick nearly as quick. Would that make you feel sorry?"

"What, to Porty-land, to Dotty Dimple's Porty-land? O, I'm glad about that," cried Fly, springing down from the doctor's knee to run and tell Horace she was "going to Porty-land, so her heart would stop ticking."

"Now, Dr. De Bruler," said Mrs. Clifford, "I must know what you think. Is there really anything the matter?"

"There is nothing the matter yet, madam; at any rate, nothing serious, and we don't mean there shall be. Did you expect to go east this summer?"

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"No, sir; we had intended to stay at home; but we are ready to do what is best for our precious baby."

"Well, then, when the snow is gone from that cold country, I'd take her up there, and let her have a good time. No matter if she doesn't learn to spell '*dawg*' till she is eight years old."

Mrs. Clifford smiled. She did not care in the least about Fly's learning to spell.

"In the warmest weather, I'd keep her near the sea, but when the winds are at all sharp, she will be safer at your father's, and I'd let her *flyaway* to Willow Brook."

"Don't talk of her flying away," said Mrs. Clifford. "I tremble when I hear that pet name. I'm so afraid she'll fly away to Heaven."

"Don't be down-hearted, my dear madam," said the doctor, taking her hand, and smiling

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cheerily. "She's a frail little darling, I know; but you will watch her with care, and I do think that, by the blessing of God, we shall yet see her a strong, healthy child."

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CHAPTER II.

TAKING A NAP.

As soon as the snow was gone from "that cold country," Mrs. Clifford went to Maine, with her three children. Horace took a box full of books, for he was to enter college in the fall, and did not wish to forget what he had learned; Grace took her French Grammar and her worsted work, and said she wished she could pack Cassy Hallock in the trunk, too.

"I wisht it would be Mamie Hallock that would come out o' the trunk," said Flyaway; "for Dotty Dimple won't play with Flipperty Flop."

Flipperty Flop smiled, as if she did not

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care how people treated her. She had had, by this time, so many new heads, and so many new bodies, that she was no longer the same doll; but Fly loved her with the same old love.

"How pretty Katie Clifford does grow!" said Dotty to Prudy, the night the travellers reached "Porty-land." "I should be jealous of her if her hair curled."

Mrs. Clifford had not been east for two years, and, as Fly afterwards said to her grandmother, "You ought to seen her hug aunt Mary. I tell you 'twas *orfle!*"

Aunt Mary kissed Flyaway twenty times, then held her off at arm's length, and looked at her.

"I hope our darling is well," said she.

"O, yes'm, we're all well but papa, and *he's* pretty well; but he can't come this summer; he'll come next day *after* this summer."

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"Katie grows tall," said aunt Mary, still anxiously, "but she doesn't grow stout."

"I'm following right on like my mamma," replied Flyaway, making a dash at Zip Coon, and kissing him on the forehead; "she's tall and little, and *I'm* tall and little. Dotty Dimple, *do* you go to school?" added she, whirling about, and measuring her slender figure against her cousin's; "that's what grows me so tall."

> "It is the growing soul within our Kate,
> That makes our Katie grow,"

said uncle Edward, kissing her; and then aunt Mary remembered that Norah had rung the supper bell five minutes before.

"You got here just in the right time," cried Dotty Dimple, shaking out her napkin; "there's going to be a fair at the hall, and 'twill be perfectly splendid. A fish pond,

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and a lady of the lake, and ice-cream, and everything."

"O, mamma, mayn't I go?" asked Fly, pushing back her plate, and forgetting to eat any more supper.

"Wait till to-morrow, and then we will talk about it," said Mrs. Clifford, very sorry the idea had been put into the child's head.

Next day Flyaway looked pale and tired; but her first question was, "Please, may I go to the fair?"

"I will tell you after breakfast, darling."

Fly's temper was naturally sweet, but her sickness was making her rather fretful.

"I don't wish you was dead or anything, mamma," said she, "but if you was dead, I'd have a steb-mamma, like Mamie Hallock, I s'pose."

Mrs. Clifford was taking a wrapper out of the trunk for Fly, and did not answer.

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"I'd have a steb-mamma, and she wouldn't be 'quainted with me, and she'd let me do all everything what I speaked about. And when I asked, 'Please, may I go to the fair?' she'd smile just this way, and say, 'Yes, darling, you shall.'"

Katie put on such a honey-sweet look as she imitated this make-believe "steb-mamma," that Mrs. Clifford buried her face in the trunk, to hide a smile. Katie thought she was crying.

"O, I'm so sorry," said she, running up to her, and throwing both arms around her. "*Did* you think I wished you's dead? I's only in fun, mamma, and I do love you so dearly, now, honest."

Flyaway did not tease any more, and after breakfast she had her answer. Her mother knew she ought not to go to the fair, but it was so hard to refuse the child any pleasure, that she said,—

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"Katie, I'll tell you what you may do; you may go with your cousins to-night, if you will take a nice nap; otherwise, I cannot consent."

Ah, Mrs. Clifford did not know what mischief would follow from these words. Mothers wish to do the very best for their children; but they are only human, and sometimes they do make mistakes.

Flyaway danced for joy, but there were tears in her eyes at thought of the nap.

"Gracie," said she, running to her sister, "I always had to go to bed when the clock strikes seven, but I shan't to-night, any more'n you do. I'm goin' to see the Fair."

"And what is a Fair, chickie?"

"Didn't you ever see one? It's something where they have a fish-pond, with a fishing stick, and a 'ladle of the lake,' and a egg-tree, and — O, yes, some i-screams, in

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saucers, pink and yellow. Aunt Mary's going to cook some. She's cooked lots o' things, and the boys have tookened 'em up to the hall in a basket. And mamma said I might fish. It's five cents a fish."

"What do you want of fishes, child?"

"Now, you don't know," laughed Fly; "it's dolls, and *pin-quishions*, and candy-bags, we fish. I hope I'll get something pretty, and give it to Hollis."

"What gay times!" said Grace, glad to see her little sister so pleased.

But Fly's face clouded over, and the tears started, as she said, —

"Mamma says I can't go *athout* I have a nap."

"Well, run right along, and go to sleep, and have it done with, and then you'll feel happy."

"But I can't stop, it takes so long. What are you busyin' about, Gracie?"

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"Writing letters for the Fair. They are going to have a post-office, and you just see if Fly Clifford doesn't get a letter — that is, if she takes her nap!"

"Well, I will; but I want to see Norah make the tarts, and I want to go to the hall with Dotty. Where's mamma?"

"She is helping thy aunt Mary tie up flowers," said grandma Read, entering the room with her knitting-work. "She wishes me to attend to thee. Come into the dining-room, my child, and lie down on the sofa."

Flyaway dared not disobey.

"But I can't make myself sleep," moaned she, walking towards the door, "and my mamma said I couldn't go to the Fair athout I had a nap."

"Thee'll be asleep before thee knows it. Now, run."

"What does folks do to make 'em go to

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sleep?" asked Fly, turning the door-knob round and round.

"O, shut up thy eyes, and count — one, two, three, four, five."

Then grandma Read went into the dining-room with Flyaway, and covered her nicely with a shawl. She dropped her flossy head on the sofa cushion with a mournful air, which made grandma smile, and say to herself, —

"She looks sadder than poor Queen Mary of Scotland, when she laid her head on the block to have it cut off."

"A good sleep to thee, my dear," said grandma.

"I can't," whispered Fly, squeezing her eyelids together tightly.

"One, two, three, four, five — I can't. One, two, three, four, fi —" Grandma slipped out of the room, and shut the door.

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In about three minutes, Fly opened it, and said, in a pitiful tone, —

"*Course* I can't sleep when I'm talking to myself! My eyes wouldn't stay — they came right open; they did, honest."

"Think of a flock of birds flying in the air," said grandma, and went and covered her up again.

That time she staid two minutes, and when she came into the parlor her eyes were wider open than ever.

"I can't think about birdies flyin' in the air, grandma; I can't, honest. I want to go out and see Norah. I spect she's shelling eggs for the egg-tree." And the tears came, as she added, "My eyes won't stay; but my mother said I couldn't see the Fair *athout* I had a nap."

"Go back, then, and think about fishes sailing in the water."

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"Do you mean tinty polywogs, or great big whales?" asked Fly, appearing for the third time. "Need I stay all alone six hours, grandma Read?"

Then kind grandma took her work into the dining-room, and sat near the door. Flyaway lay a long while tossing about, and grandma was just thinking she had seen Norah do a washing, and not make half as hard work of it as this, when Mrs. Clifford came in with a pan of flowers in her hand.

"I'm so glad, so very glad!" she whispered.

Mrs. Read looked up, wondering why she was so glad, and why she did not speak aloud. And what do you think? Flyaway had suddenly grown perfectly still, and was lying with her eyes shut. Not a minute ago she had sprung up, saying, "O, I feel just like frettin'." Could she have dropped off

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so quickly as this? Impossible. Her mother thought she was asleep, but grandma Read knew better.

Mrs. Clifford staid five minutes, making bouquets, and all the while that dancing Flyaway lay as still as the rug on the hearth. Mrs. Clifford picked up some scattered leaves, and rose to go away, and then Flyaway stirred.

"What a nice nap you've had, my little daughter! That's right. Now you'll feel all so fresh for the Fair."

Flyaway smiled; but a dull pain came in grandma Read's heart. Would this dear little girl deceive her mother? It seemed like it.

"And I always thought her such a truthful, honest child! Well, well, I'll wait, and see how it comes out."

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CHAPTER III.

GOING TO THE FAIR.

"I HAD no idea you'd go to sleep so soon," said Mrs. Clifford.

"What will I wear to the Fair, mamma?" asked Fly: but grandma Read observed that she did not raise her eyes to her mother's face.

"What a funny question, little daughter! Didn't you look at your new blue dress, that was spread out on the bed, and say you were so glad it was finished in time for the Fair?"

Fly did not seem to hear. She began to talk very fast about the fish-pond, and egg-tree, and *i-scream;* but grandma Read saw

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she did not know what she was saying. There were no tears in her eyes now, but a look far sadder than tears — *a look of guilt.* Katie was deceiving her mother.

"I wan't to see the Fair *dref*-fly," said she, with a nervous laugh; "and I hope I'll get a letter out of the *post-ovvis* — don't you?"

There wasn't much music in her laugh, and she hopped about the floor as uneasily as if she had a "toothache" somewhere.

"I'm going out to see Norah shell the eggs! I s'pose auntie'll stick gold paper on 'em," said she, glad to escape from the room.

"I know I have been foolish," said Mrs. Clifford to Mrs. Read, as the door closed; "but it is so hard to refuse these little children what they have set their hearts upon!"

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Grandma Read was just thinking she must tell about the make-believe nap, when the door opened, and in walked Katie, meek and sad, with her finger in her mouth. Her mother had never seen those little feet move so slowly before.

"Mamma," said she, looking straight at the carpet, "do you — do you — "

"Do I what, my dear?"

Flyaway dared not finish.

"Do you — O, mamma, I'm going to be married when I'm little, and have it over with."

This was not what she wished to say. Mrs. Clifford knew it by the way her eyes rolled. She tried it again.

"Mamma, do you — Don't you s'pect I'd better be married when I'm seven or eight years old, mamma, and have it over with?"

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Fly had what Horace called her "look of anxiousness," and Mrs. Clifford was pained to see it; but she could not help laughing; and then Flyaway's eyes rolled again.

"Come, Katie; sit here in my lap, and tell me what you are trying to say."

When the child had her arms around her mother's neck she could speak, though her voice was rather faint.

"Do you, mamma, — do you — *don't* you — want me not to go, you know, to that Fair *athout* I had a nap?"

"What is it, dear?"

"Did you, mamma, *did* you not be willing I should go to that Fair *athout* I had a nap?"

"O, did I say you couldn't go, unless you had had a nap? Yes, I was afraid you would be sick; but since you have slept so nicely, I'm not afraid of it any more."

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"But I was a *make-believer*. I didn't have a nap, mamma," cried Flyaway, with a hopeless wail. "I didn't have it, mamma; you thought I did, but I didn't!"

Grandma Read, quiet Quakeress as she was, could almost have cried for joy. There was their darling little girl once more — their brave, truthful Katie Clifford!

"O, you wanted to make mamma think you had been asleep," said Mrs. Clifford, quite surprised. "Now I begin to understand it! That was very naughty of you — wasn't it, dear?"

"I'll never do so any more," sobbed Flyaway. "But I can't get a nap, mamma; my eyes won't stay — now, honest!"

The tone was, O, so dreary! The "white truth" had cost dear this time, for she knew her mother never broke her word, and could not take her to the Fair.

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Mrs. Clifford looked troubled. It was now three o'clock, and this nervous child as wide awake as a bird on the wing. She herself had intended to finish the bouquets, and then help aunt Mary write some fortunes for the egg-shells; but no matter for that; her little girl needed her.

"If you are going out now," said she to grandma Read, who was leaving the room, "will you please tell aunt Mary I am busy?"

"That is right," thought grandma.

"'Never count the moment lost;
Never mind the time it cost:
Little feet will go astray;
Guide them, mother, while you may.'"

"Shall I tell you a story?" asked Mrs. Clifford, without another word about the nap.

"Tell 'bout the 'Old Woman and the

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Kid,'" said Fly, in a discouraged tone. She had lost the Fair, and didn't much care for anything else. But as her mother's voice chanted out the familiar words, —

"'I SEE by the moonlight,
It's AL-most midnight,
TIME Kid and I's at home
An HOUR and a half ago,'" —

she could seem to see the butcher, the rope, the bear, and the gun; and when the kid was fairly landed safe at home, she turned round to ask, —

"And did the old woman say, 'Thank you,' mamma?"

Then followed the story of the Three Bears; but Fly's dove-like eyes were wide open still. Then the ballad of the unfortunate mouse, whose long tail was bitten off by the cat; but she pitied the mouse too much to feel sleepy. Time was flying; yet

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Mrs. Clifford persevered. The buzzing ditty of the Abominable Bumblebee was the first thing that caused the least twitching of the eyelids, and when the patient mother sang, in a drowsy tone, with no more meaning in it than in the wind blowing through a pine tree, —

"There was a little darling
I used to know,
And her name was Katie,
Long time ago,"—

the child looked straight up at the mouth which was singing, till the pearly teeth in the mouth began to sail away off, and away off, and did not come back again. Aunt Mary stood at the door a minute peeping in; and she and Mrs. Clifford smiled at each other, for the dear little girl was sound asleep.

They laid her on the sofa as carefully as

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if she had been made of the brittlest blown glass, and she slept a whole hour.

"Thee has done remarkably," said grandma, watching the child's eyes fly open at last.

"O, ho! you s'pose I've been asleep?" cried Katie, the "look of anxiousness" all gone from her face. "Well, I couldn't help but laugh! What you smilin' for, mamma? Was you glad your little Katie's goin' to the Fair?"

The struggle in the child's mind had been severe before she could tell the brave truth; and now her eyes shone, her cheeks glowed, and her tongue overran with the happiest nonsense.

"Grandma Read thought I did RE-markably," cried she, skipping to the piano, and playing "The Grasshopper's Dance" as fast as her fingers could fly. "But, Hollis, I

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guess mamma rocked me to *purpose*; what do you s'pose? Always when I try to mind mamma, and can't do it very easy, then she *helps* me mind her; and I think she's real good. What makes you open your eyes so round?"

"Why, nothing, Topknot, only you talked so much as the minister did last Sunday. He said, 'God wishes us to obey Him, and *helps* us obey.' Guess you heard the sermon — didn't you?"

"No, I never," replied Fly, hanging her head. "Meeting was *tediouser*'n ever last Sunday, and I didn't notice a single which word!"

"Ah, but you find out things for yourself, — some pretty deep things, too!" said Horace, twining a lock of her hair round his finger, wonderingly.

Nothing vexed Fly that evening. She

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put "every single clo'es on her," fastening her frock all but the "belowest button," and saying to Dotty, "I've got a blue dress, and so've you. We look just like two peas!"

All went on beautifully till Mrs. Clifford's head, which had been aching all day, grew so bad that she could not go to the Fair. Fly was full of pity, and "wisht some *other* woman had that headache, stid o' mamma." Still she could not help being happy, after all, with brother Horace to take care of her. The hall was gay with lights, and flowers, and cedar mottoes, and the people could walk about as they pleased, looking at the various things on the tables, such as velvet cats and dogs, beautiful pictures, and bright-spotted butterflies, with needles under their wings. Fly had a piece of scrip, "with a five on it, and a kind of O

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to it;" but it was not big enough to buy everything, and Horace had to tell her so. She wanted to make him a present, and slipped under the table to go and ask Grace, privately, what she thought he would like.

"Why, where has that little witch gone?" said the big brother, gazing about in such wonder that one lady said to another, "That is a fine-looking boy, but he stares as if he wasn't quite bright."

After a long search, Fly was found at the other side of the room, fishing on her "tippy-toes," mouth wide open, eyelids winking, hair out of braid and flying wild. From the dry pond she fished a dry mug, which came up with a broken handle.

"Give her another nibble," said a gentleman, who was looking on, laughing.

That time she drew out a box of sugar cherries full of rose-water, and while she

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was saying, "O goody!" the gentleman gave her a music-box that could play six tunes.

"I did it to make the child speak to me," said he afterwards to his wife; "and I wish you could have heard her say, 'O, I thank you ever so much;' it was as sweet as the notes of a harp."

The "ladle of the lake" brought her a walking doll across the waters. Horace gave her a basket, and Grace a string of beads, and there was a letter in the "post-ovvis" to Miss Thistledown, which read like this: —

"May never falsehood in her heart
Or in her words abide;
But may she act the truthful part,
Whatever may betide."

"False HOOD?" said Fly, finishing her pink i-scream; "what's that? Get me my

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hat, Hollis, and put my two *ollinges* in your pocket."

"A falsehood's a lie," said Horace, as they were walking home with Susy, Prudy, Dotty, Grace, and aunt Mary.

"Then I shan't keep it in *my* heart," whispered Miss Thistledown, looking up at the moon and stars, which shone in a friendly way, as if they thought she meant to be a good girl.

"Well, have you had a pleasant evening?" asked her mamma, when they got home.

"O, I *'joyed* it," cried Fly, holding out her hands full of treasures. "O, I *'joyed* it; 'twas splendid! But poor, poor mamma. I forgot you had the headache."

"Well, never mind," said Mrs. Clifford, holding the little darling to her heart — music-box, sugar-plums, walking-doll, and

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all. "I've 'joyed' my headache, 'cause I've been thinking of a dear child I used to know, who told the truth when she didn't want to."

"'Long time ago!'" murmured Fly; and then they both laughed.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE DIMPLE-MAN.

THE Cliffords staid at Portland only long enough for a little rest, and the "next day after Sunday" started for Willowbrook, where they took everybody by surprise. Grandma ran out with open arms, and dropped her spectacles into the grass. Aunt Louise was walking in the garden with a young gentleman, and when she cried out, "There's my dear sister Maria, and all her children," he stole quietly away; and though Fly looked hard after him, she could not see much but the side view of his nose.

"Was that Mr. Edmond?" asked Mrs. Clifford, when the hugging and kissing

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were well over. "I wish he had not run away."

"O, he will come again perhaps, and then you will see him," said aunt Louise, blushing.

"Well, it's pitiful 'bout his nose," remarked Fly; "it's very *diffunt* from some folks' noses, 'cause it's so big."

It was a joyful time for everybody. Ruth, whose eyes were as black as ever, said the sight of "wee Katie" did her more good than the new silk dress Mrs. Clifford had brought her from New York; but Abner liked the dress better than anything else, for Ruth had promised to be married in it, and it made the wedding seem a little nearer.

The place was looking lovely. There was a new swing; the seat in the trees had been freshly painted, and so had the old boat, the "Water Kelpie;" in the garden gay flowers

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were nodding, and the pink heather, which bordered the beds, glowed like the morning sky.

There had been some changes in the town. The pretty white bridge was gone: a freshet had carried it off in the spring, and people were obliged to cross the river in a large ferry boat. Fly had never seen a ferry boat before, and when Horace went to mill one day she wanted to go with him; but the pulleys made such a noise, rattling over the rope, that she clung to her brother, and begged him to pull Deacon Pettibone (the horse) very tight, so he wouldn't run off into the water.

"I will hold him by the bridle," said a good-natured, red-haired man, who was crossing in the boat with them, "and then the little lady will feel easy."

"Thank you, Mr. Blacker," said Horace;

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and the "little lady" thanked him, too, with her eyes.

Now she was no longer afraid, and could look at the "river drivers," in their gay red shirts, as they walked across the great piles of logs near the old piers, and pushed them apart with poles.

Sometimes the men sailed down stream on the logs, and when one log rolled quite over, carrying a man under the water, Fly cried out, —

"He's killed! he's killed!"

"No, my little lady, he won't die so easy as that," said Mr. Blacker; and, as he spoke, the man came up again, dripping and laughing.

They had crossed the river by this time, and Fly watched Mr. Blacker, as he led the horse out of the boat, to make sure Deacon Pettibone didn't tread on his feet.

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"Who was that man?" asked she, when they had driven up the ferry hill beyond his hearing.

"Don't you remember him, Topknot? The man that comes to grandma's with a little green trunk, and mends the tea-kettle and the clock?"

"Yes, Hollis, but this one isn't that one: didn't you see the little dimples on his face? Lots of 'em, just like freckles."

Horace laughed so that he almost dropped the reins.

"He has had small-pox, Topknot, and that makes people have little dimples; but I never heard them called by such a pretty name before."

In the afternoon, as Horace was in the nursery, trying to read Virgil, with Fly combing his hair, and frizzing it over a hot slate pencil, aunt Louise said, —

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"Look out of the window, Fly. There is some one coming that you ought to know."

"O, it's the Polly woman," said Fly, half glad, half sorry; "and there's a veil over her face."

She loved Miss Polly, but her sadness was dreadful, and the child had never yet found out "what did ail her."

"I'm glad we're going to make candy to-night," said Grace, looking up from the worsted pansies she was working on her father's slippers; "we shall need something to comfort us."

"There's a person with her. It is Fly's 'dimple-man,'" exclaimed Horace, and would have told what she had said in the morning about the little pits on his face; but the pencil gave such a jerk that he forgot everything but the pain.

"I do hope he will come in," said aunt Louise, "for our tea-kettle leaks."

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But he only stopped at the gate long enough to say a few parting words to Miss Polly, and then trudged up the hill, with his little green trunk under his arm. Miss Polly watched him a minute through her thick brown veil, and Fly knew pretty well she was sighing, as she turned and walked with her "creaky" shoes along the path to the house.

"Grace," said aunt Louise, "did you ever think how queer it would be, if somebody should come along, after all, and marry Polly Whiting?"

"Why, no, I never dreamed of such a thing, auntie."

"Husbands are pretty plenty, I suppose aunt Louise thinks," said Horace; "but I reckon the river will run up hill before anybody will want to marry Polly Whiting. Topknot, you mustn't make her laugh.

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Something has happened to her mouth, and she doesn't look well when she opens it."

"How do you all do?" said Miss Polly, raising her veil as she passed by the nursery window. "And if there isn't little Katie Clifford! I've come on purpose to give her a good hugging."

"Louisa," added she, in a low tone, after she had come in and spoken to the children, and was taking the third pin out of her summer shawl. "Why, Louisa, she looks more like a spirit than ever! I should think you'd be dreadfully worried about her."

Horace heard the words, and they troubled him for the rest of the day. Why need that woman go about, with her double-covered basket, carrying gloom to people's houses?

"Worried? O, no," said aunt Louise, brightly; "all the child wanted was our good New England air, and some of grand-

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ma's cream toast. She grows better every day. Don't you, Fly?"

The little one had been gazing at Miss Polly all the while, in surprise, and did not cease gazing now. What was it so very odd about the woman?

"O, I know. Your teeth are gone! Your teeth are gone!"

"I thought you'd notice it," sighed Polly; "but if you knew what a time I'd had with toothache, you wouldn't wonder I wanted them out. I don't look natural — do I, dear?"

"Yes, you do, 'm, I guess," replied Fly-away, doubtfully; "but you look very soft round your mouth. How old are you?"

"Hush, Topknot; that's impolite," whispered Horace.

"O, I don't mind it, Horace. How old should you think I was, Katie? I really want to hear what the child will say."

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"Seventy, or ninety. No, a hunderd," replied Flyaway, after reflection. "Lots older 'n you was last time, you know."

"Well, I was forty-five a week ago," said Miss Polly, smiling, and opening her basket. But Flyaway did not see any particular difference between forty-five and a "hunderd."

"You are quite a young woman yet," said aunt Louise, roguishly; "and how old is Mr. Blacker?"

"How should I know?" answered Miss Polly, bending her head over the basket. "Is your mother pretty well to-day?"

Horace observed how suddenly Miss Polly changed the subject; but Fly only thought it very queer that the good woman's basket and shoes should creak just alike.

"I suppose you will be in a hurry to have your new teeth," said aunt Louise, still looking roguish.

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"Well, the dentist has promised to put in the first set next week," said Polly, with a smile, — a "soft smile," perhaps Fly would have called it, but a happy one, too; in fact, Miss Polly had already smiled several times, and, as she joggled the knitting needles over her gray knitting-work, she did not sigh as often as usual.

"Will the new ones ache?" asked Fly, after another thoughtful gaze at Polly's mouth.

"No, dear, or you wouldn't catch me having 'em in *my* head."

As Miss Polly spoke, a spasm of pain seized her, and she covered her face with her handkerchief.

"If you'll believe it, my teeth have spells of aching harder now than they did before I had them out. You needn't laugh, Horace; I am telling the truth."

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"Grandma," asked Fly, after supper, as she watched Grace buttering the candy-kettle, "is the Polly woman goin' to stay here till her new teeth come?"

Grandma sincerely hoped not; but Polly had no real home of her own, and when she was sick, or in any trouble, there was no place in the world where she found herself so comfortable as at grandma Parlin's.

"Polly's groaning with the *nothing-ache*," said Horace, coming into the kitchen to laugh. "She has left her teeth at the dentist's, grandmother, but they are aching like fun. Don't you pity your spectacles? You left them at the jeweller's, and I suppose they are in dreadful distress, too! Why not?"

"You're so naughty, Hollis," said Fly, in the reproachful tone she often used towards her brother. "Poor Polly! she couldn't eat nuffin but *podge* for her supper."

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"Why, Grace, what are you making? Sugar candy? Where's your vinegar?"

"I'm tired of vinegar."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said Horace. "I'll put in some of the tartaric acid I bought yesterday for the cream beer. That will make the candy just sour enough; so here goes."

"O, don't," said Grace, who knew her brother's fondness for mixing things together in strange messes; "you are so careless, Horace! Now I'm afraid you have put in too much."

"Nonsense! Can't put in too much. I tell you it will give it a nice, sour flavor, like lemon-juice. Here's another tea-spoonful; now stir as fast as you please."

Grace dared not say any more, lest he should empty the whole paper into her kettle.

When the candy was boiled, aunt Louise

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and the children had a little frolic pulling it, and trying to snatch it away from one another; but they soon found it was not worth snatching — it was not only as sour as lemon-juice, it was also as bitter as wormwood. Grace was vexed, and thought she had a perfect right to be.

"It's the *taraballic* acid," said Katie, with a wry face. "O, Hollis, what made you?"

But when she saw that he looked quite mortified, she changed her tone at once, and bravely took a second bite, then darted off to get a cup of sugar.

"Why, Hollis," cried she, rolling her stick of candy round and round in the sugar, and tasting it again. "It *almost* makes it sweet, with sugar on; it does, *now*, *honest*."

Everybody laughed at this, and thought it as odd a thing to sweeten candy, as it would be to "gild refined gold, or paint the

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lily;" but Horace did not feel much like laughing.

There was something in his little sister's devotion to him that touched his heart, for well he knew she would never have eaten that bitter candy, if any one but himself had put in the "*taraballic* acid."

When Ruth saw what a great fire Grace had left in the stove, she thought it would be well to finish off the ironing she had laid aside for to-morrow morning; and while she went back and forth from the stove to the table with her flat-irons, Abner sat and talked with her about the new silk dress Mrs. Clifford had brought home from New York, and both said "the next thing would be a wedding dress for Louise, and then what a hole there would be in the house!"

There was a hole coming in the house sooner than they expected, and I must tell you about it.

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CHAPTER V.

THE HOLE IN THE HOUSE.

KATIE would have eaten a large quantity of the bitter-sour candy, to soothe her brother's feelings, if Mrs. Clifford had not come to her relief by throwing it all away.

"But it makes my throat just as smooth," said she; "hear how nice I can sing."

"Where did that child get such a voice?" cried the enraptured Horace, as she sat on her mother's knee, singing one of her evening hymns: —

"Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear us,
Bless thy little lambs to-night;
In the darkness be thou near us,
Keep us safe till morning light."

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"She takes her voice from her grandfather," said grandma Parlin, looking fondly at the dear old man, who was keeping time to the tune with his fingers.

When Fly went to bed, she had an unusually loving good-night kiss from her brother, only she was too sleepy to think of it.

Time passed away; nine o'clock came, half past nine; and, one by one, everybody in the house went to bed except Ruth, who was ironing, and Abner, who was talking to her about the little farm he intended to buy next spring. But all the while Polly's face had been painful; those absent teeth of hers had ached worse, she thought, after a mouthful of the bitter candy; and about ten o'clock when Horace was fast asleep, his mother waked him, saying, —

"Polly says she really cannot bear this

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distress any longer, and I think, my son, you will have to go for the doctor."

Horace rubbed his eyes, and looked very cross.

"She might have thought of that in the daytime," said he, "and not wake a fellow up in the dead of the night to paddle across the river. Why doesn't she send Abner?"

"My son, you know Abner has not patience with poor Polly, and I don't like to ask him."

"He has as much patience as I have," growled Horace, with such a hideous face that Mrs. Clifford laughed outright, though she had been running up and down stairs for flannels, and poultices, and hot water, till her own temper was a little tried.

"I'll go, for your sake and grandma's; but of course there's no sense in it, for when I tell the doctor she has the nothing-ache,

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he'll send her some nothing to cure it," said Horace, talking himself into good humor.

"Well, any way, my dear, you are doing your duty, and good will come of it to somebody, if not to Polly," said Mrs. Clifford, as she closed the front door after her son, thinking how beautiful it was, that, however vexed he might be with other people, he always meant to be respectful to his mother.

Dr. Gray had lately removed to the other side of the river, and Horace must row across in the "Water Kelpie," and then walk half a mile farther to his house. It was a fine, still evening, but not a soul was to be seen in the streets, and the only two stores in the village had been closed an hour ago. Dr. Gray had been riding the night before, and was trying to make up his sleep, so that it did seem a pity to wake him; but he threw on his clothes, and came down stairs with the best

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will in the world, thinking somebody was very ill at the Parlins'.

"What! nothing but one of Polly Whiting's whimseys," said he. "Well, I'm not going a step. You may give her this vial, and the directions which I shall write on a paper; and be sure to send your dear old grandmother to bed; it is a shame to have her waiting on Polly."

Horace went home, feeling crosser than when he came.

"Catch me routing the doctor up again for any of her 'whimseys,'" thought he; "mother and grandmother are too patient with her altogether." And as he broke the perfect stillness of the night by dipping his paddles into the water, he fell to thinking of what his mother had said: "You are doing your duty, and good will come of it to somebody, if not to Polly."

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"I don't see what good is coming out of this. I shall only sleep an hour later in the morning, and perhaps lose my breakfast. Stop! what's that light through the trees? Can't be the moon!"

No, the moon was just overhead, daintily picking her way through a drift of white clouds. Well, if it wasn't the moon, what was it? Growing larger, too, every minute! It couldn't be fire! Yes, it was! it was! O, where?

Landing, and fastening the boat quickly, he ran with great strides up the bank, urged on by the thought that he was the only person awake in town, and must save somebody's house. Whose? The trees stood in his way, but he feared he knew too well. How horrible to be burned in one's bed!

"Mother! Flyaway! Grace!" he called out, as he came to an opening in the trees,

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and saw just what he had dreaded to see — the roof of his grandfather's house in flames.

Not a soul in sight; no one to cry to for help, unless he should run some distance down the street, and he dared not wait to do that. He rushed up the bank, screaming, "Fire!" with all his might, went round to the back door, and pounded on it, shouting, —

"Abner! Ruth! Fire!"

The bolt was fastened, but he could see a light through the window, and Ruth standing at the table, ironing. The noise brought her and Abner to the door, roused Grace from sleep, and Mrs. Clifford and grandma from the watch they were keeping beside Polly's easy-chair. It was not too late. A spark had crept through a hole in the chimney, and set the roof on fire; but as yet the flames had gone no farther; there was still time to save the house.

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A ladder through the scuttle; everybody at work bringing water, tooth-aching Polly and all; and in half an hour the danger was over. Horace's shouts, as he came up the bank, had aroused some of the neighbors, and they got there after the flames were put out, "just in season," as Ruth said, "to spill a lot of water on the back stairs." Of course there had been a great fright in the first place; but it was succeeded by a feeling of relief, and the family were too happy and excited to go to bed. Fly supposed, for some time, that they were trying to kill rats in the attic; but when she was made to understand the dreadful thing that had *not* happened, she said,—

"O, Hollis, you s'pose, if it had burnt all up, we'd have got that thing that's under the *pillow?*"

She meant the bottle of wine which had

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been buried under one of the pillars when the house was built, and which she had always been rather curious to see.

"I'm so thankful, so happy! and, Polly, you're the one that saved us," said aunt Louise, warmly.

Miss Whiting did not know how she had saved the house, but she was glad she had done it, and passed around her snuff-box very cheerfully.

"By the way, Miss Polly," said Horace, taking the vial out of his pocket, "how are your teeth?"

"Bless my heart, they've been aching all this time, and I never thought of it," said Polly, rubbing her face with the lotion, and feeling the pain come back as hard as ever.

No one laughed, for everybody was reflecting on the narrow escape, and how strangely it had been brought about. Grandma did

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not know there was a crack in the chimney, or she would not have allowed Ruth to build such a hot fire; but after the spark once flew out of the chimney, what had prevented it from burning up the house? If Miss Polly had not had the toothache, she would have gone to help Mrs. Gordon make a bed-quilt. If she had not been "spleeny," she would not have wanted the doctor. If grandma and Mrs. Clifford had not been kinder to her than her other friends were, they would have left her and gone to bed, instead of asking sleepy Horace to paddle across the river in the night. If Horace had not been an obedient boy, he would not have gone. These were small things, when you thought them over, one by one; but, taken altogether, they had saved the house, and possibly some of the inmates, from burning up.

And who had ordered that it should be so?

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Who orders everything, and holds this little world of ours in the hollow of his hand?

Horace was quite impressed, and did not talk much all the next day. Fly, observing it, said, —

"Hollis, you don't look like usual."

"Topknot, do you ever forget to say your prayers?"

"No, indeed," replied she, biting a gum drop into the form of a star. "Mamma always 'members 'em to me."

"Well, you must pray real earnest, Topknot, for God hears you, just as true as you live!"

"Course he does. He puts his ear right down, and then, when you've said, 'Forever, never, never, Amen,' he goes back up to heaven."

"O, no; he fills the whole heaven and the whole earth, darling, and when we are

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in trouble, he sends angels to take care of us."

"Serious truly?" said Fly; and just then they heard Mr. Edmond and aunt Louise singing in the next room, —

"Angels, standing where we're wandering,
Watch our walk, and guide our way."

"Hollis, isn't brother Harry a angel?"

"Yes."

"And when I die won't I be a angel, too?"

"O, Topknot, don't speak of that; it's dreadful."

"Why, I think it's real nice. I'll be a angel, and then I and Harry, we'll fly down on a cloud, and take care of you."

"Topknot, Topknot! stop it, this minute; I can't bear it. I won't have it!" said Horace, in a choked voice, as if he had a pillow

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over his mouth. "Harry doesn't love you as I do. He died before you were born."

"Well, I don't 'member much about him," said Fly, thoughtfully; "and you swing me so good, Hollis, I guess I won't go up yet; not till I go to Porty-land, you know."

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CHAPTER VI.

THE LITTLE BACHELOR.

In July, the weather became extremely warm. Mrs. Clifford and Horace took Fly with them to Portland. Uncle Edward's house was near the sea, and the salt breeze blowing towards Fly seemed to lift her drooping head, and flush her pale cheeks. Once or twice a week she went to Old Orchard Beach, to play about the white sands, and dance in the foamy surf, but, even in Horace's arms, she dreaded the deep water. After she had learned to enjoy her baths, however, it was funny to hear her beg her mother to go in.

"Needn't be afraid, mamma. *I'll* hold you up."

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She ordered her brother about, and he waited upon her like a humble slave. He had always boasted of his poor memory, and seldom did an errand, unless there was a string tied round his little finger; but whatever Topknot wanted he never failed to get for her, if it could be found on sea or land.

And how did she repay such kindness? By scolding him as she would not have dreamed of scolding any one else.

"Wish somebody kept nuts in their pocket. Wish somebody was fanning me. I'll give you just *fi-ive* minutes to—*please* bring me a drink of water."

If she fell down, it was—"Hollis, you ought to tookened better care o' me." If her hat blew off into the water, she complained that "Hollis *destructed* her things."

The adoring brother laughed at all this, and cared for nothing but to see his little queen grow strong and well again.

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"You'll kill that child with kindness," said Percy Eastman, Dotty's cousin, who was in no danger of waiting upon his own sisters too much. "But, then, I can't blame you, for she's the loveliest little creature I ever beheld," said he, in a tone too low for her to hear; and Horace decided that Percy was a capital fellow, after all, and made Fly sing for him, "The Shepherd's Pipe Coming over the Mountain." Her dress was white, with a soft, white ruffle round her neck; her golden hair was drawn away from her forehead, and fastened with a blue ribbon; her eyes sparkled, and her cheeks were rosy once more with health.

"Bring your chair, youngling, and come sit here by me," said Percy.

Fly objected to being called "youngling," and would not have obeyed; but when she looked at Horace appealingly, he said, "O,

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yes, Topknot," and she went. She did not drag her little chair after her, as some children do; she was better instructed than that. She carried it in her right hand, and was careful not to pass before Horace.

"There's a darling. Thank you for coming to Portland to see me, Miss Toddlekins."

"But I *didn't*, sir. I never knew you were here."

"Well, it's all the same," said he, seating her on his knee; "and you're going to be my little girl to keep. You'll learn to like me better than you do Horace, for I have a mustache, Toddlekins, and he hasn't."

Fly opened and shut her eyes indignantly, for she never allowed any one but herself to find fault with her dear brother.

"Please put me down," cried she; and away she ran, to whisper in Horace's ear that she "'spised *mustidges;* they looked 's if

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FLY DESPISES "MUSTIDGES." Page 80.

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folks had another eyebrow over their mouths."

That afternoon Dotty was seized with toothache, and her mother took her to the dentist.

"She keeps a having it and having it," said Fly, full of pity. "I'm afraid she'll be 'bliged to eat podge, like Miss Polly, and this slip stuff you boil in a kettle."

Fly meant rye-pudding.

"But, Hollis, I want to go and see her tooth tookened out, and you must go with me."

"Can you go without crying? Answer me that, Topknot."

Fly considered and considered.

"I don't know what I'll do when I get there," replied she, at last; "folks can't tell. But, Hollis, ain't I your dear little sister, and don't you love me? So now then, you must

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do all everything what I want you to, and be pleasant."

"Well, get your hat, Lawyer Topknot, and come along."

Aunt Mary thought it would never do for Fly to see the tooth drawn, but she would stay in the room, and watch the process. Dotty took ether, and danced up and down in the big chair, saying such droll things that Fly was greatly amused; but when the aching tooth was out, and Dotty came to her senses, Fly sobbed with all her might, and could not be pacified.

"There never was such a tender-hearted child, sir," said Horace to the dentist. "She can't bear to see anybody suffer. Why, Dotty wasn't hurt a bit, darling. Come here, Dimple, and let her see you smile."

"Right across the street is a man that keeps candy," said the dentist, with a pity-

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ing look at the little girl, who still lingered near the large chair, crying so hard that it was some time before Horace could get her out of the room.

"I want," said she, when she was going down stairs, "I want — I want — that man to pull out one of *my* teeth."

"Why, Topknot, Topknot, you don't say that's what you've been crying about!"

"Yes it was, too. O, Hollis, when mamma pulled out my tooth, it was *very diffunt* from Dotty's. She didn't put any sponge to my nose."

"Poor little thing!" said Horace, looking as sober as possible; "your teeth are all sound, and you'll have to wait. But don't you think, auntie, if she lives long enough, they'll ache some time? Try to be patient, dear."

They had crossed the street, and Fly was a

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little consoled on hearing Horace ask a kind-looking man to put some pears, dates, and bananas into a paper bag.

"Hollis," she whispered, leaning against the counter, "don't you think those are very big *pepnits* for a cent?"

He bought her a handful, of course.

"O, thank you, ever so much. I'm *so* glad I didn't ask for 'em."

Fly had never had such good times in her life as she was having now at Portland. The basket picnics at the "Island," with all aunt Mary's family, and mamma, and Horace, would have been perfect, only sometimes the Eastmans went too, and then Percy took the whole party in his yacht. Fly did not like rocking about on the ocean, and thought it still "tediouser" when the young men stopped the yacht and went to fishing.

Sometimes they landed near the great rag-

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ged rock called Whitehead, and then Johnny was sure to dare Dotty to climb as steep a cliff as he could, and there was danger that they would both fall into the sea.

"Now, children," said Mrs. Parlin, one day, after she had divided the dinner, or "pieced" it, as Fly said, and they had all eaten heartily of cold lamb, bread and butter, and strawberry pies, "suppose you stop racing for a few minutes this afternoon, and let us have a little quiet."

"So we will, mother," said Prudy. "O, boys, wouldn't you like to play charades? Please don't go yachting; we can't act at all without Horace."

"That's the same as to say you don't care whether I stay or not," said Percy, twirling his "mustidge;" "but if Miss Thistledown will play with me, I shall be only too happy. Pray, tell me, Miss Thistledown — Why, where has the little thing gone?"

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Horace spied her blue dress fluttering behind an oak tree; but it was some time before she could be persuaded to listen to Percy, who was "the *disagreeingest* person she ever did see."

The boys had observed some children in the tents along the shore, playing with a wheelbarrow. If Percy could borrow the wheelbarrow, would Fly let him play "The Little Bachelor," and "fetch" her home from London?

"If you will, I'll bring you a deer, when Horace and I go gunning in the woods next winter."

Fly consented, not knowing what a deer might be, and was arrayed as "The Little Wife," in a newspaper suit, with belt and pocket round her waist, and paper cap on her head. She sat in the wheelbarrow, under the shade of a parasol green with oak

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leaves, and in her hand she held a huge bunch of grasses. Percy, the "Little Bachelor," smilingly wheeled her through the narrow lanes of London, with all their housekeeping goods packed on his back. Of course, in turning à short corner, —

> "Wife had a fall;
> Down came wheelbarrow,
> Wife and all."

But she rolled out so easily, and tossed her bouquet at the little bachelor in such a make-believe pet, that there was great clapping and laughing.

Fly enjoyed it as well as the rest; but what she did not like was to hear Percy call her his "little wifie," after it was all over, and declare he "should wait for her to grow up." That drove her off into a cave; and it took so long to find her, that there was no time for Prudy to arrange "Mrs.

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Jarley's Wax Figures," as she had intended.

A shower was coming up, and the party had to collect their shawl straps and baskets in a hurry, and run to the Ottawa House. It proved to be an unusually heavy thunder storm, and, as Fly heard the rolling peals of thunder, and saw the keen flashes of lightning, her little heart quaked with fear, and she crept into her mother's arms, saying, in a faint voice, —

"Sounds a little bit like Fourth of July, mamma. You s'pose, is it some of God's torpedoes?"

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CHAPTER VII.

FLY'S BLUEBEARD.

By the last of August Fly was really very well, and having such good times that she begged to stay longer.

"But you know grandpa is not very well, and Horace and I must go home. Would you be happy to be left here without us?"

"O, yes, mamma, 'serious truly, black and bluely.' If you don't let me stay, seems 's if I should die."

Mrs. Clifford smiled, and said she could not think of taking her away at the risk of her life.

"The moment she cries, or shows any signs of being discontented, Prudy and Alice

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shall go home with her in the cars," said aunt Mary.

"Perhaps I shall feel worse, after all, than my little daughter will," said Mrs. Clifford, as she kissed Flyaway good by.

"O, you'll get over it, mamma," said the child, in a comforting voice. "Mamie Hallock's mamma cried *dreffly* when Mamie went to *Minnysipolis*, but *she* got over it."

Mrs. Clifford answered by throwing another kiss from the car window; for by that time the train was moving off, and Fly, in trying to get the last look at mamma and Horace, was dancing here and there like a tuft of thistledown.

She had expected to be very happy at Portland; but she had not thought how odd it would seem there without either her mother or brother. She had not known before how much she needed them close at her el-

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bow. Everybody was kind, and Dotty Dimple treated her like company; but she could not tell her whole heart to any one but mamma and "brother Hollis," and she had one serious trouble, which no one suspected. Percy Eastman had been in the habit of going gunning and yachting with Horace, and, as he had not much to do, he kept on calling at his uncle Edward's every day after Horace had gone. He was a pleasant young man, but a sad tease, and liked to talk to Miss Flyaway, and see the color come and go in her cheeks.

"I've decided to wait for Thistledown, aunt Mary," said he; "she'll be my little wifie when she grows up, and I'll bring her home on a wheelbarrow."

"O, no, no, no!" cried Fly, with a wrinkle in her forehead deep enough to pour water in.

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But aunt Mary did not think anything about it; for Percy was always talking nonsense.

"Come back here, little wifie," said Percy, catching her as she fell over Zip Coon. "Nimble Fly, she ran so spry, she tumbled over the doggie."

The child had never fancied Percy, but from that moment there began to spring up in her heart a bitter dislike of the gay young man. She did not think she should be obliged to marry him; she knew he was in sport; but it was the silliest joke she had ever heard of, and he kept repeating it till she was almost tempted to call him an "iggernamus."

"I don't like that *tormentable* man. He's the sauciest boy ever I saw."

Prudy told the "tormentable man" what she had said; but he did not know the sen-

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sitive child thrilled all over with terror whenever he drew near; and nobody else knew it, for she was too shy to tell how she suffered.

"Come here to me, you pretty little snip of thistledown," said he, one day, drawing her out of the corner where she had gone to hide; "you'll stay in Portland always — won't you? Now promise me, my dear."

"I can't *promidge*, 'cause I'm going to my grandma's."

"You break my heart, Miss Toddlekins. When, O when are you going?"

"Soon 's I cry to go; my mamma said so. Please put me down."

"Well, darling, here's a peach to keep you from crying. Look up here, and let's see if there's a tear in your eye."

"There's tears *ahind* my eyes," said Fly, winking with all her might; "and when

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folks plague me, then I cry easy, and cry real hard. Won't you please to put me down?"

"No, I can't put you down, but nobody shall plague you, darling; and if you ever do go home, I'll drive you in a five-wheeled coach, with five green horses."

"O, no, no, no!" cried Fly, too much alarmed to wonder at the unusual color of the horses; "I'm going home with Prudy and Dotty."

"Not in the cars, my dear; you can't go in the cars. There's been a terrible accident to the bridge between the — the Chokecherry Mountains and the Little Siamese — Siamese — here, I've got a paper in my pocket that tells all about it."

"O, dear! does uncle Edward know it?"

"To be sure he does, Pet; but I shall tell him I will take you home myself.

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No trouble at all; not the least in the world."

"O, no, no, no. I can walk. I'd *rather* walk."

"Walk, little wifie! Why, there's a *quadruped* in the street, going on all fours. You may ask your uncle Edward if there isn't."

As Fly had never heard of a quadruped before, the word, spoken in such a tone of mystery, frightened her half out of her senses.

"And on the way home," added Bluebeard, delighted to perceive that she was listening eagerly, and making no effort to get down, "on the way home, we will call to see my aunt Tabitha Bumpus, who lives in a blue cottage under the hill. Have you ever heard me speak of my dear aunt Tabby? I cannot think of her without tears."

"Well, you needn't tell about her; I

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don't want you to," said Fly, as the roguish youth buried his face in his handkerchief. "Please put me down."

"O, but I wish you to know how afflicted she is. She had a husband once, a "tormentable man," but he made good sausages; and she had seven sons,—the 'sauciest boys'—ever you saw!"

Fly opened and shut her eyes, and tried to get away from Percy and the story; but it was of no use.

"Well, one stormy Monday, aunt Bumpus asked her husband to hang out the clothes, and I suppose it hurt his feelings, for he was never seen alive after that!"

Here Percy shook with grief.

"About nine o'clock that night, aunt Bumpus happened to look out doors, and behold! there was no clothes-line; then she remembered her husband was missing, and she sent

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her seven boys to hunt for him; and, Thistledown, where do you think they found him?"

"In the snow?"

"No; in the back-chamber, choked with a clothes-pin."

"Did it hurt him any?"

"Hurt him! He was as dead as a door nail! It was a *patent* clothes-pin, my child."

"Well, I'm real sorry; but won't you let me get down?"

"Ah, and then aunt Bumpus was a widow, and her seven boys would have starved if it hadn't been for the sausages. I've given them each a jackknife, and they think a great deal of me; and I must go there, and take my little wifie!"

"Let me go, sir. Please let me go."

"Certainly, dear; you shall go to-morrow, if you say so."

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"O, *don't* let me go — not there. I want to see Dotty and Prudy. I don't feel well."

"Wait a minute; there is one thing that troubles me. We must go to see aunt Bumpus; but I'm afraid you'll have to sleep in that back chamber. Really, I—"

The poor child had escaped at last, with a cry of terror. Percy laughed lightly, and thought no more of aunt Bumpus till he saw Flyaway again next day. If he had possessed finer feelings, he would have seen that he was torturing the dear little girl; but he was a careless young man, and only thought how funny Fly looked, winking so fast, and shaking the flossy hair out of her eyes.

"O, Dotty," cried she, running up stairs, "did you know there was a woman had a husband, name o' Bumpus, and he killed himself with a clo'espin?"

"You are the queerest child," laughed

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Dotty; "I'll have to tell Prudy what you said."

Fly could not bear this. If people were going to "tattle what she said," she would not tell them anything. No, she would shut her troubles into her own little heart, and keep them there till she should see mamma and brother Horace. She did not care much about eating or playing, for there had really been an accident on the railroad, — she heard uncle Edward say so; and if Percy *should* drive her home, what would save her from his aunt Bumpus? Strange how he did love that woman! Fly pined in secret over the blue cottage, the weeping widow, the seven noisy boys, the sausages, and, above all, the dreadful back chamber, where she should be obliged to sleep. She woke from frightful dreams of that chamber, which she thought was full of scampering mice and crawling spiders.

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One night, her heart swelled into a perfect storm of tears; but she did not know she was crying aloud, till aunt Mary came in to see what was the matter.

"I don't know," sobbed the child, too timid to explain. "Dotty sleeps very hard, and when I wake up, it scares me to see folks asleep."

"Don't you feel well, darling?"

"Something 'most gives me a pain right here," said Fly, laying her hand on her heart; "and when I'm sick I want my mother."

"The dear little thing is homesick," said aunt Mary to uncle Edward; and the very next day she sent her to Willowbrook with Prudy and Dotty.

Percy did not hear of their going; so Fly was spared a good-by from her Bluebeard. No sooner was she seated in the cars, than

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her face rippled with smiles, and she asked Prudy for "sandiges" and sponge cake out of the basket, which she ate eagerly, making up for lost time.

"How happened my darling to come home so soon?" asked Mrs. Clifford.

"O, I couldn't stay, 'cause I cried," murmured Fly, hiding her face in her mother's bosom. "I lied on my back all las' night, and auntie was afraid I'd have a *conniption* fit."

Mrs. Clifford understood it better when she saw the child alone, and heard the story of the widow Bumpus.

"There never was any such woman, dear, and Percy made it all up."

"Why, he said it forty million times. Isn't he a horrible boy? I guess he thinks children are *foolidge*."

"Well, my daughter, it really is very fool-

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ish to grieve so much for fear dreadful things are going to happen, and it is not right. God will take care of his dear little girl. Don't you know it, Katie?"

"Yes, mamma; but I was afraid he'd forget to come down just once, and then Percy 'd carry me off to his aunt Bumpus."

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CHAPTER VIII.

PLAYING WOMAN.

DOTTY and Fly were becoming fast friends. Dotty declared her little cousin had more sense than most children of that age, and when Prudy, or Tate Penny, or Jenny Vance was not to be had, Dotty could play with Fly, and be well satisfied. But it was Fly's great trial at Willowbrook that Jenny Vance came to grandpa's so often, and staid so long. Horace had gone to Moosehead Lake with a party of young men, and Fly felt the need of a playmate. But Dotty and Jenny were so busy during the bad weather, making Christmas presents, that they forgot the poor child entirely.

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"O, Dotty, you didn't play with me yes day, and you haven't played ever since."

"Dear me, why don't you sit down here and finish that holder, Fly? It is going to be so pretty. Have you seen it, Jenny? It is for my mother.

"'Molly, put the kettle on,
We'll all take T.'"

"But it tires me to pieces, Dotty."

"Well, Fly, we'll play with you, if you'll wait till ten o'clock," said Jenny.

"What letter stands for ten?"

"X."

Fly rushed out to the kitchen, where Ruth was washing the floor, mounted a chair, opened the clock, and jerked the short hand round to ten, breaking it off with a snap.

"Why, child alive, what are you about?" exclaimed Ruth.

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"How do you do, Ladies?" Page 106.

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"I wanted it to be ten o'clock," said Fly, frightened at what she had done.

Ruth laughed.

"Doesn't time go fast enough for you, dear? Well, you've broken the hand, and it's only nine, after all, just as it was before. But don't worry about it, sweetest," added Ruth, who never meant to hurt the child's feelings. "The clock was out of order before, and Jonathan Blacker is coming to mend it; so you just run back to the nursery, off my damp floor, and play with the girls."

Fly went to the nursery, threw herself on the sofa, closed her eyes, and the girls thought she was going to sleep; but she suddenly sprang up, exclaiming,—

"It'll never be ten o'clock now, 'cause I broke it, and so you needn't wait. I'm going to play 'Come and See.'"

"But we are busy," said Dotty.

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"O, you can work just the same. — There, now, I've come to see you, with all my children," said she, dragging Flipperty Flop out of the closet by the hair of the head, and following with the rest of the family in a wicker basket. "How do you do, ladies?"

"One, two, three, four," said Dotty, counting stitches.

"I'm playing woman," said Fly, knocking on the door. "I ask you how you do."

"Dotty, have you any more straw-colored worsted?" said Jenny.

Fly pounded with a book, which brought grandma to see what was the matter.

"She wants us to play woman, grandma, when we're right in the middle of these tidies!"

"But they won't do it," said Fly, with a grievéd face; "if I scream their ears in two they won't do it."

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"Girls," said Mrs. Parlin, with a meaning smile, "seems to me it is well for you to play woman once in a while; you are getting old enough."

Dotty blushed as she met her grandmother's eye.

"But it bothers us; and we're *so* busy!"

"Yes, I know it, dear; it does take great patience to play woman."

"O, grandma," stammered Dotty, pricking her finger, "I see what you mean."

"The greatest patience; for a true woman is willing to be bothered now and then, especially when dear little children are not well, and need to be amused."

"O, grandma, we will! O, Mrs. Parlin, we will!" exclaimed both the girls, dropping their work.

Fly's pale cheeks glowed, and her eyes brightened. She had known, all the while,

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that she needed to be amused. If Dotty and Jenny had been made to understand it, she was glad.

"Perhaps we can put in the groundwork, and talk, too," said Dotty, as her grandmother left the room. "Fly, your name is Mrs. Snippet; does that suit you?"

"O, it's splendid."

"And my name is — let me see — Pancake. And, Jenny, you are Mrs. Polywog."

"Well," said Jenny, "and I'll be deaf; 'twill make more fun."

"Ahem! how do you do, Mrs. Cinnamon?"

"My name isn't Cindamon," screamed Fly; "it's Snippet."

"And how old is your baby?" asked Mrs. Pancake.

Fly caught up her smallest rag doll, and held it to her throat. "She's one and a half months old, 'm."

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"Indeed! I hope the little darling is well."

"No'm; she's dreffle sick — got the *spigy-pate*." Fly meant the spinal complaint.

"Do tell me how it happened," asked the deaf Polywog.

"Broke her back a-sitting up straight on a sled, athout anything to lean on," shrieked Fly; "and then she took the *spigy-pate*."

"Dreadful! dreadful!" exclaimed both ladies.

"How many children have you, Mrs. Snippet?"

"Six, 'm, I *b'lieve*."

"How many did you say, Mrs. Cinnamon?"

"Well, nine," screamed the fond mother, counting her fingers; "nine, 'm; but my name isn't Cindamon. I guess it's nine. Had thirteen in the first place, but three four died."

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"How sad, Mrs. Snippet, how very sad! Do you ever punish your children?"

"Well, I shut 'em up in the closet sometimes. They steal my 'serves, though," added Fly, suddenly remembering her own babyhood. "They like it too well to be shut up in the closet."

"Children are such trials, Mrs. Snippet! But where's your husband?"

"Down to the *ovvis*, smoking. He's a very smoky man, and I can't bear him."

"Why did you marry him, my dear lady?"

"O, I thought he was a *manly* man, but he isn't; he's a smoky man, and smokes the children all up. I'm going to get *disvose*."

"And how will you do that, Mrs. Snippet?"

"O, I shall go to the church, and say to the church, 'My husband is a smoky man;

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take him away.' That's a disvose; don't you know?"

"My good friend, I beg you will think well before you do it," said Mrs. Pancake. "Be cautious, be—"

"I don't wish to hurt your feelings, Mrs. Cinnamon," broke in the deaf lady; "but it's my opinion that your baby is dying."

"O, dear! O, dear!" said Fly, tossing the child into the air; "can't you stop her dying?"

"Give her a blue pill," said Mrs. Polywog.

"O, hush," said Mrs. Pancake; "blue pills have 'gone out,' long ago. I wouldn't give medicine that wasn't fashionable. I'll go for the doctor."

"Get some tinty white pills," said the anxious mother; "her throat is *so* small!"

Dotty soon returned with half a thimbleful of flour, folded in two bits of white paper.

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"'One every quarter of an hour till you see an improvement,' the doctor says."

But the poor little rag image was beyond hope.

"She's dead in one eye," cried Fly. "There, now she's dead in both eyes!"

"I knew the medicine wasn't strong enough," said Mrs. Polywog, decidedly. "What she needed was a blue pill."

Mrs. Snippet's grief was loud.

"She talked and runned about so cunning!" said she. "O, dear! O, dear!"

"She *was* a very smart child for six weeks old," observed both ladies, with a smile; "but don't grieve so, Mrs. Snippet, and we'll get up a lovely funeral."

It was decided to have it in Polynesian style. The room was full of make-believe people, and the dead baby was handed about among them to be looked at.

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"That is the way they really do in Polynesia," said Dotty, "for I heard a missionary say so; and then they bury the child in a mat."

A lamp-mat was large enough, and a grave was dug behind the sofa.

"Shall you dress in mourning, Mrs. Snippet? I hear it is going out of fashion in some places."

"In the morning? O, yes, I *always* dress in the morning," replied Fly, whose spirits had risen so much, after the funeral, that she consented to go into the kitchen and "plague Ruth a while."

"There, that's over with," said Dotty, threading her needle; "and we really did play woman — didn't we, Jenny? For it's truly womanly to try to make folks happy."

"Yes, so I heard your grandmother say."

Dotty peeped up to see if Jenny were

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making sport of her; but she looked perfectly serious.

"I do like to please children," added Dotty, with a gush of self-satisfaction. "If I had some little brothers and sisters, I do believe I should be very patient with them. Jenny, you ought to be so kind to Neddy and Sammy! for, only think, if they should die!"

"Well, I am *kind* of kind once in a while. I'm as kind to them as you'd be, Dotty Dimple," said Jenny, scornfully. "Haven't forgot how to preach yet — have you? You used to talk just that pious way when we were little, and it always made me want to laugh."

"Don't know what you're talking about," said Dotty, angrily; "but if I preached, it's likely you needed it."

"O, yes! I needed your preaching! I was awful!"

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"Well, you certainly were, Jenny. Didn't you tell lies upon lies, and steal cake out of your mother's cupboard till she didn't hardly dare invite company, for fear there wouldn't be enough to eat?"

"Well, was that any of your business?"

"No, but it was some of my business when you tried to steal three dollars out of my grandma's rag-bag."

"Yes," said Jenny, wincing; "and didn't you get down on your knees in your nightie, right before me, and tell God I was the wickedest girl in this town? — I never forgot that in you, Dotty Dimple."

"Well, 'twas no wonder I thought you were wicked. Everybody thought so, Jenny."

"Really, Dotty, you surprise me. And what did they think of yourself, — a girl that pretended to be so dreadful good, and told as many lies as I did?"

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"Lies! Lies! I never told more than four or five in my life, and they were as white as milk."

Jenny laughed, and Dotty stamped her foot.

"You made me tell a lie about going strawberrying once, Jane Sydney Vance."

"Did I, indeed, Alice Wheelbarrow Parlin?"

"Yes; and I'll leave it to anybody which was the worst girl. You may ask my grandmother if she didn't almost forbid my going with you."

"She did — did she?" said Jenny, rising, and pushing back her chair. "This is all new to me, but if it's true, I think it is high time I was going. I bid you good by, Miss Wheelbarrow!"

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CHAPTER IX.

BUTTER SPOTS.

DOTTY was taken entirely by surprise. They had talked so fast that she had not stopped to think they were quarrelling, and now Jenny was leaving the room in anger, perhaps never to return; for she was slow to forgive an offence.

"Good by, Miss Wheelbarrow!"

Two years ago Dotty would have responded, "*Bad* by, Miss Sydney," and opened the door for her to go out. But Dotty was no longer a little child. She was old enough to be ashamed of having treated a guest in this way, and for a moment she stood before Jenny, tongue-tied. "She is

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more to blame than I am," thought Dotty; "but it will never do to have her go off in this way. What shall I say?" She had to think fast, for Jenny had already got as far as the door.

"Stop, Jenny, stop!" said Dotty, forcing a laugh. "Why, anybody would think we were about as old as Fly Clifford, to hear us talk! It was ever so many years ago that grandma said she didn't want me to play with you, and what's the use to mind that now?"

Jenny hesitated.

"And I was a naughty girl, or I shouldn't have heard her say it at all," added Dotty, with a burst of candor. "I was listening in the entry."

The idea of Dotty's confessing she had been a naughty girl! Jenny closed the door gently, and stood with her back against it.

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"Well, I'm not very good," said she, "and never was; but you weren't extra good either, Dotty Dimple, and I'm glad to hear you own it."

"O, I didn't listen on purpose. But, really, Jenny, you'd better stay; now do."

"Well, if you won't put on any more airs, perhaps I might as well come back and finish my tidy."

This was not a very gracious way of accepting an apology, and Dotty had half a mind to say so, but conquered herself, and led her visitor along to a chair.

"Have a summer sweeting, Jenny?"

"Yes, if you please."

That seemed to settle the matter very pleasantly, and Dotty supposed she should hear no more about it; but, in thinking of it afterwards, Jenny remembered that Dotty had not said, "I am sorry," and she did not

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feel quite satisfied. Next day she came again, to teach her friend how to make a new kind of lamp-mat, for Jenny had great skill in fancy work.

"Why, what's that queer noise in the kitchen?" said Fly; "who's a-makin' it?"

"I guess it must be your 'dimple-man,' and he's mending the clock you broke," replied Dotty, as the strokes pealed out on the air; "seven, eight, nine, ten," curiously mingled with the sound of Mr. Blacker's voice, singing through his nose, —

"Gayly the troubadour
Touched his guita-ar."

"Let's all go out and see him," said Dotty; "he talks so funny."

Fly was a little afraid he might ask her why she had meddled with the clock, but plucked up courage to tiptoe behind Dotty and Jenny, with her finger in her mouth.

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"Good morning, young ladies; how do you do?" said the tinker, while the clock went on, "twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four."

"She for the troubadour
Hopelessly we-ept."

"Ah, now, girls, do you suppose anybody would weep for me, if I should go off to the wars?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Dotty, beginning to sing with him, while, to add to the noise, Jenny took up Mr. Blacker's soldering iron, and beat out the tune on a tin pan.

"For mercy's sake!" cried Ruth; "I shall have to stop scraping my kettle, or I shall go raving distracted."

"'Sad-lee she thought of him,
While others slept,'"

went on the tinker, through his little pug nose. "It would be kind of comforting if I

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really knew there was somebody to think so much about *me*." And then he gave a queer laugh, that ended in a whistle.

"Perhaps there is somebody," said Ruth.

"Who, for instance? Not you, Ruth? You wouldn't cry if I should go away and never come back again?"

"Indeed, I wouldn't. I don't cry for such old bachelors as you are. If you want any crying done, Mr. Blacker, I suppose you know who is ready to do it?"

The tinker looked as if he felt a little vexed, but Dotty could not imagine the reason, and did not understand it any better when Ruth said, roguishly, —

"I can't think of anybody under the sun that would take pains to lie awake nights, crying for an old bachelor like you, Jonathan, unless it is Polly Whiting, and perhaps she would."

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"'Singing, in search of thee,
Would I might ro-oam.'

"Now, look here, Ruth," said the tinker, becoming roguish, as well as she; "better not say too much about old bachelors, for Abner may be one yet, if you don't get that wedding-dress made before long.

"'Troubadour, troubadour,
Come to thy home.'"

Ruth blushed, and put her kettle into the sink cupboard; but, as she could not think of anything very bright to say, she went off into the pantry, and shut the door.

The tinker smiled quietly to himself — a smile that had more than fifty "dimples" in it, and taking up the stove-cover, put his soldering-iron on the coals to heat.

"Well, girls, I got the better of Ruth that time; now, didn't I?"

Dotty was still puzzled. She understood

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why Ruth had blushed, and gone into the pantry, for everybody knew she was to be married to Abner, if she ever got time to make her wedding-dress; but what was this joke about Miss Polly? She did not comprehend it at all.

It was a lovely day, and, to prove that it was no longer wet, Fly brought in a dry blade of grass, and showed it to Dotty, begging her to go out and play.

"Jenny, it does seem strange to me," murmured her cousin, "that the moment you and I get fairly at our work, that child begins to tease."

"Dear me, Dotty, weren't you the one that talked yesterday about trying to make people happy? I don't pretend to be as good as you are, but I'm willing to play with Fly."

"Mrs. Clifford," went on Jenny, as that

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lady entered the room, "may I take little Katie out doors? I'll be very careful of her."

"Yes, and so will I, too," said Dotty, feeling rebuked, but, at the same time, vexed.

They were going to build a house, of loose boards which Abner had hauled for the hennery, and left outside the fence, near the road. As Dotty went back to the shed for a hammer, she heard aunt Maria saying to grandma, —

"Wasn't it sweet of Jenny to be willing to amuse that poor, cross child? I never saw any one improve as Jenny Vance does. I hope her politeness is genuine."

Dotty did not wait for the answer; she would not be so dishonest as that; but she wondered what "genuine" meant, and kept wondering all day.

The house was easily made, as it had nei-

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[redacted] doors nor windows, and its two rooms were separated by a broomstick. Fly was charmed, however, and allowed the girls to bring their worsted work, and sit in the parlor, while she was busy in the kitchen. It might have been very pleasant, only Jenny's sarcastic smile would flicker over her face now and then, and she would remark, cuttingly, —

"*Truly womanly* to make people happy, is it? I think I heard you say so, Miss Dimple. But you wouldn't have built this house, if it hadn't been for me; now, would you? I'm surprised at you — when you preach so much, you know. Do be kind to the little children, my dear; for, only think, if they should die!"

"Is it polite to be always twitting anybody of every single thing they say?" cried Dotty, angrily. "*I* don't believe it's polite, or *genuine*, either."

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But it was of no use; Jenny would have the last word. Dotty's other playmates bowed before her, and tried to "keep the peace;" but Jenny bowed before nobody, and, if there was to be any peace, Dotty must keep it herself. Much Dotty marvelled whether Jenny was truly polite. She had travelled with her father, seeing some of the best people in the land, and had learned to be graceful and self-possessed; but she could put on or take off her fine manners, just as she pleased; and, when alone with Dotty, she usually took them off.

"Grandma," said Dotty, following the dear old lady into the pantry, just before tea, "please tell me what you mean by 'genuine.'"

"Well," said grandma, skimming cream, "genuine means *true*. We say people are genuine when they are sincere in all they say

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and do; when they never try to appear better than they really are."

"Jenny tries to," thought Dotty; "now I know she isn't genuine; but grandma wouldn't like it to hear me say so."

At the tea-table, Dotty looked about, saying to herself, "Are we girls all genuine?" She soon discovered that one, at least, was both genuine and polite, and that was sister Prudy. The way she found it out was this: —

"Katie," said their grandfather, just as they were finishing supper, "how do your chickens grow? Do you bring them into the house every night?"

Fly owned three little motherless chicks.

"No, sir; we take 'em in rainy nights; we don't take 'em in *sunny* nights."

"Well, this isn't going to be a sunny night," said grandpa, with a smile. "I think it will rain before morning."

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"Please 'scuse me, grandma," cried Fly, in a great bustle; "I must go 'tend to those chickens."

In her haste the child dropped her knife, which fell on Prudy's new blue merino, buttering it in two places. As everybody was rising from the table, the accident was observed by no one but Prudy and her grandmother.

Dotty strolled into the kitchen a few minutes afterwards, and saw Prudy at the sink, scraping her dress with a potato-knife. When she asked what was the matter, Prudy could not answer for her tears.

"Katie did the mischief, with one of her quick little dashes," replied grandma; "but Prudy insists upon it that nobody shall tell aunt Maria."

"It would make her feel dreadfully," said,

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the lovely girl, wiping her eyes; "and what good would it do?"

Grandma said no more, but brought a bottle from the closet, and began to rub the spots with chain lightning. To Prudy's joy and surprise, the dress was soon as clean as ever. Dotty, who had been looking on, exclaimed, —

"O, Prudy, you are a true lady; you are *genuine!* Isn't she, grandma? For she thought her dress was spoiled, and she never made a fuss. When *Prudy's* polite, it's away down deep. If that had been Jenny Vance's pink and white silk, now —"

"Or Dotty Dimple's green poplin," said a low voice in her soul; and she stopped without finishing the sentence.

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CHAPTER X.

POLLY'S SECRET.

RUTH was mopping the kitchen floor, as usual, and Flyaway was perched on a cricket in the sink, reading aloud from the "Five Happy Children." She had learned a good deal within six months, but skipped so many words, and miscalled so many, that Ruth had no idea what the story was about, but liked to hear the music of the "nightingale's tongue."

"O, Abner, there's some of the *best* jokes in this," said Fly, pressing the book to her bosom, as Abner appeared in the doorway.

"No doubt of it, dear. Did you bring back the hammer and nails I lent you yesterday?"

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"Yes, sir, I bringed 'em back."

"Sure, very sure?"

"Yes, sir; but," added Fly, hesitating, "I don't know's I did, though."

"Just as I thought," said Abner, laughing; "but I wouldn't build any more houses if I were you; for Mr. Bean drove his cow into yours last night, and I had to pull it down. We can't afford to take care of his cow."

"Please lift me down, Abner. I want to go and tell Dotty."

Dotty and Jenny were sewing in the nursery, and heard of the loss of their house with perfect calmness. Fly herself did not mind it so much when she found what they were doing. Dotty was trying to be "genuine," and please her little cousin; so she had persuaded Jenny to help her make a "graduating dress" for Flipperty Flop, who

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had completed her education, and was about to leave school. As they were fitting the basque, and Fly hemming the skirt, which she could do very neatly, Miss Polly came in, looking rather flushed and nervous. Aunt Louise had seen her from the garden, where she was gathering flower-seeds, and told Mr. Edmond, who was with her, that Polly had something on her mind.

"How do you all do, children? Where is your grandmother?"

"She is spending the day at aunt Martha's," said Dotty.

"I dare say she'll come home to dinner," struck in Fly, who had just caught up the phrase "dare say," and thought it very fine. "I dare say she will, but I don't *believe* she'll come 'fore night."

Miss Polly smiled, and showed some new white teeth.

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"I'm sorry not to see your grandmother. Has anybody else gone?"

"Yes'm; Hollis has gone away off up to *Goosehead* Lake."

"Well, I'd like to see Prudy," said Polly, looking amused again.

It was true that she had something on her mind, and, strangely enough, could tell it to Prudy better than to any other person in the house, except grandma Parlin. But after they had gone off together to the green chamber, Polly found it harder to speak than she had expected.

"Are you sure you can keep a secret?" said she.

Then she talked about the frightful number of grasshoppers. "Katie told little Willie Gordon he mustn't kill them,—they were God's grasshoppers.

"'Yes I shall, too,' says Willie; 'the hens want 'em.'

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"'Well, then, you may,' says Katie; 'cause God's got so many grasshoppers I guess he won't care.'"

Then Miss Polly paused, and when she spoke again, it was of typhoid fever, while she looped up the muslin curtain three or four different ways, and folded and refolded the towels on the rack. Presently she took a toilet cushion off the bureau, seated herself on the bed, and began to pick out and put back the pins.

"Prudy," said she, without looking at her, "Prudy, what should you say if I — Is the water in this pitcher good to drink? How do you like Mr. Blacker, Prudy?"

"O, very much indeed," replied Prudy, who guessed what Miss Polly was trying to tell.

"And what should you say if I — Now, Prudy, you certainly never will tell," said she, holding the cushion before her face.

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"No, indeed. Didn't I promise, Miss Polly?"

"As long as you live and breathe? For I'm getting along in years, you know, and people might say I was silly. But, you see, I never had a home, Prudy. I was bound out when I was a mere child, and had to dig and delve from morning till night."

"Yes, Miss Polly, you've told us all about that."

"O, no, dear, not all, nor half. I've only told you children a very little. You haven't the slightest idea."

Prudy was afraid she would begin that old story again; but she broke off, saying, —

"And now, Mr. Blacker — Well," sighed she, smoothing her very smooth hair, and smiling behind the toilet cushion, "it has been going on now for about a year; but there, it sounds so silly, that I can't tell you."

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"I can guess what it is," said Prudy, laughing; "just please let me guess."

"Why, how should you guess? Your aunt Louisa hasn't heard anything — has she?" returned Polly, looking quite frightened. "I don't want things talked over; it isn't a good way. *But* I'm glad you like Mr. Blacker. He is pretty well off; that is, he has made considerable money mending clocks, and he isn't one that spends much on himself; so I think he'll be able to provide a good home. And the idea of *my* having a home!"

Here Miss Polly dropped the cushion, and Prudy saw that her usually sad face was covered with smiles.

"O, Miss Polly, I'm so glad for you? Where are you going to live?"

"Hush, child! the window is open. Something *may* happen yet; but if we both live,

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and have our health, and nothing prevents, I *suppose* we shall rent that little white house near your aunt Martha's."

"O, how nice!"

"But it won't take place much before winter," said Polly, in a very faint whisper, and hiding her face behind the curtain again.

"That lovely house, with the piazza round it! O, I'm *so glad*, Miss Polly!"

"Well, we didn't feel sure, till to-day, that we could have it; and now, perhaps, it isn't certain; nothing is certain in this world. But I did want your grandmother to hear of it. She is the best friend I have, Prudy. She has given me a good meal many a time, when I didn't know where to look for a crust of bread," sighed the homeless wanderer, taking out her snuff-box, and dropping a tear into it.

"Let me in! Won't you please let me in?" piped a sweet voice at the key-hole.

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"Yes, let her in, Prudy," said Miss Polly, wiping her eyes; "but be very careful about what you say before either of the juveniles; now, remember."

"I know what that means by *juggernil*," said Fly, dancing up to Miss Whiting, and laying her cheek on her shoulder. "You mean *me!* What made you stop talking 'cause I came in?"

"O, we hadn't any more to say," replied Polly, kissing the child. "You do love Polly Whiting a little — don't you, my dear?"

"Yes'm, I love you ever so much; 'specially when you smile up your face. And you know," said Fly, passing her small fingers round the wrinkled lips, "your mouth looks harder, and your white teeth are very 'comin' to you."

"I'm so glad you do love Polly Whiting!

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It's a pretty name — isn't it? Do you think you'd like it as well if it was Polly Blacker?"

A most unwise question, and Polly would not have asked it if she had not been very happy, and, as she expressed it, "rather stirred up in her mind."

"Polly Blacker!" repeated Fly, thoughtfully; "it's a real nice name, but I don't like the sound of it very well."

Polly smiled again. It seemed as if she could smile more easily since she had had her new teeth.

"O, now I know what you mean," cried Fly, whirling about on one foot; "you mean that man with red whiskers and blue *wooling* coat — the one that fixes the clocks!"

Polly looked as astonished as though the bureau had suddenly spoken, and revealed her secret.

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"Why, Katie Clifford!" said she. "Why, *Katie* Clifford!"

Prudy stole out of the room, laughing quietly to herself.

"She smiled just as *cheerfully*," remarked Fly, looking after her.

"You're such a singular child, Katie! What do you know about the red-whiskered man? You'll scare me to death."

"Did I, Miss Polly? Why, how did I scare you? Please tell me some more about the clock-man."

"Some more, Katie! I haven't told you anything yet — not a single word."

"No, but when *was* you goin' to marry him?" persisted Fly, greatly interested; "and will you make some wedding-cake?"

"Well, there! Katie Clifford; you're the most singular child," said Miss Polly, greatly vexed, but smiling behind the pin-cushion.

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"Who would have thought that such a little pitcher as you would have guessed out so much?"

"O, I guess most everything," said Fly, gleefully. "I wasn't a *juggernil*, after all — was I, Miss Polly? But I won't tell anybody," added she, in a cooing tone, intended to quiet Miss Polly's fears. "I *solomon promidge* I won't."

"But how *could* you tell anything, child? What is there to tell?" said Polly, choosing her words carefully this time. "You haven't heard a word; you've only guessed something out of your own head."

"Well, I guessed it right — didn't I, Miss Polly? There, now, you're laughing. I *knew* I guessed it right."

"You fairly take my breath away, child! I declare, I'm at my wits' ends to know what to say *to* you. I never told you I was going

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to marry the 'clock-man,' and you've no reason to think so. *But*," said Miss Polly, "if you have such a thought in your head, Katie Clifford, you must keep it to yourself. Do you understand?"

"Yes'm," replied Fly, rapping her forehead; "right in here I'll keep it."

"For, whether it's true or not, I wouldn't have anybody get hold of it, particularly your aunt Louisa."

"O, no, I won't tell 'em; 'ticly aunt Louise! I solomon promidge I won't," said Fly, with a twinkle in her eye.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE NOSE-MAN.

"YOU s'pose, grandma, what makes folks whistle so when they got new teeth?" said Miss Fly, at breakfast table, next morning; and of course that reminded aunt Louise to ask Prudy "if Miss Polly had anything particular to say yesterday?"

"Yes, auntie; and I promised not to tell."

"So'd I, too," said Fly, looking hard at her plate; "I *solomon promidged.*"

"What! Polly didn't tell it to *you*, Miss Thistledown?"

"No'm, she din't '*zac'ly* tell me, but she told me not to tell!"

"Alas, alas! then I never shall find out;

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for you're so good at keeping a secret. Did she speak of your 'dimple-man'?"

"Why, auntie Weeze, auntie Weeze! You mustn't say that! You mustn't, you mustn't!" cried Fly, whirling about in her chair; "Miss Polly doesn't want anybody to know it; *'tic'ly* you, she said."

There was so much laughing at this speech that grandpa had to be told what it was.

"Don't look so frightened," said he, to puzzled, distressed Flyaway; "you haven't let out any secrets. Polly has told all her friends, and Jonathan has told all his friends, and it is pretty generally known that they are going to be married."

"Married! What? Married together? O, that was what Ruth meant about his having somebody to cry for him," exclaimed Dotty. "I thought it was queer about Miss Polly, all the time; for she didn't sigh, only

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at the end of every *two* needles yesterday; I kept 'count."

Fly was sitting bolt upright, winking very fast, while the tuft of hair atop of her head nodded indignantly.

"Well," said she, surprised and disappointed to find that the secret she had sacredly kept over night was no secret at all, "well, that's why her name's going to be Polly Jonathan Blacker; but I don't like the sound of it, and I won't ever solomon promidge to *her* any more!"

Grandpa heard this, and laughed till the bald spot above his forehead was quite pink. This bald spot was so large, that Fly declared "grandpa's forehead was high enough for another pair of eyes."

"Mother," said he, "I should be glad to see Polly settle down into a happy woman; but I must say I pity Jonathan."

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"A happy woman!" returned grandma; "it isn't *in* her to be happy. Children, I want you to take warning from poor, sighing Polly, and not fret about trifles. I have known her all her life, and this habit of worrying began when she was quite young."

"Yes, mother," said grandpa, as they rose from the table, "and it has grown upon her ever since."

"That's the *twoth* time he has called her mother," thought sharp little Fly. "'Spect he'll call me 'grandma' one of these days."

"I can't help thinking how queer it is for so many people to be getting married," said Dotty, that evening, after reflecting some minutes on the subject. "Now, there's Ruth, and Miss Polly—"

"Yes," struck in Fly; "and Mr. Blacker'n Abner."

"What would you say if you should hear,

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some time, that aunt Louise is engaged too?" said Grace, giving Susy's arm a sly pinch.

"Aunt Louise! O, there's nobody for *her* to be engaged to," replied Dotty. "Mr. Edmond is the only man that comes here much."

Dotty did not see why this was a very funny remark; but it seemed to amuse Grace and Susy, and she could hear them laughing after they had gone into the nursery.

"What have I said now?" thought Dotty, angrily. "Fly, let's not go into the nursery, to be made fun of by those girls."

It was seven o'clock — Fly's bedtime, and she knew it; but she did not think it worth while to mention it to her cousin.

"My mother's gone to Augusta," thought she, following Dotty into the parlor; "and I guess they'll have hard work to get me to bed."

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Mr. Edmond was seated there, talking with aunt Louise. He beckoned to Fly, who flitted across the room, and alighted on the arm of his chair. He was "very diffunt" from her Bluebeard, and she had long ago pardoned his nose. Not so with aunt Louise. Whenever Fly said, "I do think that nose-man's a darling," she never answered a word.

"Well, Firefly, what were you telling last night about the man who drove his cow into your house?"

"He talks queer," said Fly; "I guess he's Greek, or Latin."

"Stutters," remarked aunt Louise.

"Well, and what more?"

"He whips his children every night, *reg-gurly*."

"O, yes, and what's the name of the little girl you pity so much?"

"I've told you her name forty million times. It's Betty Bee-*ean!*"

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"And how many little Beans are there?"

"Why, there's Betty, and that other little girl; and then there's her sister Uny; and then there's three, four boys, name o' Dan and Dick; all got holes in their clo'es, awful!"

"And this small Bean, name o' Betty — do you see her at school?"

"Yes, sir, when my mamma lets me go to school. She sits on the frontest seat. But Betty isn't there great deal, 'cause she's got so much holes in her clo'es. And then," said Fly, with a sorrowful look, "her father whips her every night, *reggurly*. Pitiful 'bout Betty Bean."

"Indeed, it is. Has she any mother?"

"No, sir. She has a *heaven-mother;* not any mother down here."

"Does she tell you her father whips her *reggurly?*"

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"No, sir; O, no. She never speaked 'bout it to me. She wouldn't, for anything in the world, and I wouldn't ask her; O, no," said Fly, with true delicacy.

Mr. Edmond took her dainty little hand in his.

"That's right, darling. But don't you want to do something for this pitiful Betty?"

"Yes, sir," said Fly, thoughtfully; "if I had two dollars, I'd buy her a house."

"What! like the one her father drove his cow into?"

"No, indeed; jus' like this, with white *pillows* to it. But I haven't only eight cents, and I can't. I know what I want to do, though," said she, peeping at Dotty from under her lashes; "Betty never ate any *choclid* cake; she said she never; and I—I—" Here Fly could see out of the corner of her eye that Miss Dimple understood what

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she meant, and was feeling vexed. "Well, it's some Dotty's party; it's me *and* Dotty's. I — I shan't ask Betty *athout* she's willing."

"I'll remember this," thought aunt Louise, watching the frowns gather on Dotty's forehead. "Betty Bean is a good child, and she shall come to the party."

It was high time the two little girls were in bed — at any rate, Fly; but Miss Louise never took any care of the children, and Grace supposed her little sister had gone up stairs long ago.

"I'm sure auntie wants to keep us here as long as she can," thought the far-seeing Dotty. "She must get so tired of Mr. Edmond, and she doesn't look as if she had anything to say."

So, when Fly began to grow sleepy, Dotty took her in her arms and rocked her, whis-

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pering, "If you don't care, darling, we won't go to bed just yet."

"That's a lovely picture," said Mr. Edmond, as the innocent child slept at last in her young cousin's arms. Whereupon Dotty looked more motherly than ever, for she knew she was part of the "picture."

"I ought to have sent them to bed," thought aunt Louise, vexed with herself; "but now they will both be so cross, that I dread to do it."

Gradually the soothing motion of the rocking-chair had its effect upon Dotty as well as Fly. Her eyes closed, and, while thinking of something to say to entertain Mr. Edmond, she dropped fast asleep, dreaming she was in a cave at Whitehead, with Zip Coon in her arms. Suddenly something fell with a loud noise and woke her. Which had tumbled into the ocean, herself or Zip? She

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saw in a moment that it was only Flyaway, who had rolled off her lap upon the floor, and was crying from pain and fright. The bruised head felt better after it had been bathed with camphor, but Dotty looked on in such open-mouthed amazement, that Mr. Edmond and aunt Louise laughed, which soon brought her to her senses.

"Good night. I'm going to take this child to bed," said she, marching her off in a high state of dignity.

But Dotty's pride was doomed to a fall.

"Well, this is pretty doings!" said Grace. "To think of your keeping my precious baby up till this time of night!"

"Why, none of the rest of you girls would stay in the parlor," answered Dotty, crossly; "and I guess *I* wasn't going to run off and leave my auntie, too."

Miss Dimple was not prepared for the outburst of merriment which followed.

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"If she only had a little self-esteem," said sister Susy, shutting the door that the laughter might not be heard down stairs. "Why *was* she born without any self-esteem?"

"I don't call it self-esteem, Susy Parlin, when you stay in a room just to help folks talk to their company," said Dotty, with a superb toss of the head.

"O, Dotty, you'll kill us all," screamed the three oldest girls in chorus. "Mr. Edmond doesn't come here to see *you*, he comes to see auntie; and, if you want to know the whole story, they are going to be married."

Dotty sat down on the edge of the bed, too astonished to speak.

"It annoys auntie to have children running in and out when she and Mr. Edmond are talking together," went on Susy; "and I have told you fifty times to keep away from the parlor; but you always think you know better than anybody else."

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"Never mind it, Dot," whispered kind-hearted Prudy. "Horace is gone, so it isn't half as bad as it might be. Run off to bed, and I'll make the girls promise not to tease you any more."

"*Such* a big nose!" said Fly, dreamily, as she went into her nightie. "Bumps up in the middle! But I'm ever so glad!"

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CHAPTER XII.

THE OWL AND THE HUMMING-BIRD.

"FLIPPERTY FLOP, look up to me; and you, too, Diñah 'Melia," said Fly to her dolls, who sat side by side, in a high chair, Flipperty's fair cheeks and golden curls resting against Dinah's inky face and stocking-yarn hair; "Dinah 'Melia, you're *so deaf*. My aunt Weeze is goin' to be married to that nose-man I speaked about. Dinah 'Melia, do you hear? Goin' to be married to the nose-man! This is the *twoth* time I've told you. Which is your *undeaf* ear? Flipperty Flop, you mustn't sit so near Dinah 'Melia; fear her deafness will catch! I'll put your heads way off, and way off, so the ears won't touch.

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There! So! Now, Flipperty Flop, I'm goin' to make my aunt Weeze a present. Guess 'twill be a pink dawg. But you mustn't tell Dinah 'Melia. I don't want the folks to hear. Mrs. Kitten Gordon gave me ten cents, 'cause she didn't want so many kitties, and I bringed one home in a bag; Dotty helped. Now, Flipperty Flop, here's the money Mrs. Kitten Gordon gave me, and I'm goin' 'cross the river 'n buy a pink dawg; and 'haps I'll buy some choclid cake for Betty Bean, only the man don't keep any. Grandma said she's willing."

In about fifteen minutes there was a far different scene in the nursery. The two dolls still sat in the high chair, their heads very far apart, when Fly rushed in, crying as if her heart would break.

"The ferry-boat was way 'cross the river, and I swinged my arms, and screamed, but

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the man wouldn't come back and get me," sobbed she.

"Perhaps he didn't see you," said grandma.

"Yes'm, he did, now honest. Shouldn't you thought he'd wanted to make some money? I'd have given him two cents, and I'm light."

"Something has happened since you went away, darling, that will make you feel better, may be. Look behind the closet door, and see what is there."

Fly rushed to the closet with as much awe and delight as if she expected to find a blazing comet.

"Hollis! O, Hollis! You're a fast boy to get here so quick. I'm the gladdest ever I was!"

"Honest glad, Topknot?

"Yes, serious truly, black and bluely. When'd you come?"

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"In the night, just after you and Dot got tired of watching, and went to bed. O, Topknot, I wouldn't have thought that of you!"

Fly did not know what reason she had to feel ashamed.

"Well, Dotty was as asleep as I was, and more too," said she, showing the black and blue bump on her forehead, which Horace kissed and pitied.

"Ah, little miss," said he, "I remember the time when I didn't care much about you. Mother told me I must give my new sister a kiss. 'What! that horrid little red thing?' said I. And I just shut my eyes, and made a dive at you."

"I don't 'member it," said Fly, who supposed she could remember everything if she only tried hard enough.

"But now you can row me 'cross the river,

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you know; for I want to buy a pink dawg for aunt Weeze. She's goin' to be married. Don't you tell! And a choclid cake for Betty Bean, the girl I can't ask to my party, 'cause she's got awful holes in her clo'es; Only the man don't keep 'em. O, I'm so glad I've got a big brother Hollis."

And what could the big brother do but laugh, and let her lead him about as she pleased.

This was the last day of summer. In a few weeks more Horace went away to college, and Susy and Prudy returned to Portland; but Dotty Dimple remained at Willowbrook, going to school, and Fly learned to love her more and more, and look up to her as the wisest young lady she had ever known.

It was the 10th of October, Fly's birthday, and the day for "me and Dotty's party." Nearly all the little boys and girls in town

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came to grandma Parlin's "hoppity skip," Betty Bean among the rest, looking as "*speckerble*" as anybody, in one of Fly's cambric frocks, which had to be let out four inches round the waist. There was an extra "choclid cake" for her to carry home, and when she heard of it, her round face shone all over with joyful surprise.

Mr. Edmond looked in on purpose to see "the little Bean, Firefly had speaked about," and Dotty wished she had been the one that "speaked about" Betty, for aunt Louise called her the "star of the evening."

"She looks more like the full moon, I think," said Mr. Edmond, laughing.

Dotty felt quite cast in the shade. She had learned some new pieces, but Jenny Vance could play them much better than she could; and whenever she spoke of a pretty game, Jenny said it was old-fashioned, and wanted something else.

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"It has been the mizzerblest, stupidest party," said Dotty to aunt Louise, who was rolling her hair over bits of silk for the night, making her look like a "horned owl."

"Well, I 'joyed it," said Fly to her mother, who had just served her soft locks in the same way, and was now tying a gay handkerchief round her whirlabout head.

"And what do *I* look like, mamma?"

"Like a green and red humming-bird. Now, kiss me, dear, and fly away to bed."

"No wonder you 'joyed it,' Thistledown Clifford," said disappointed Miss Dimple, after they had been tucked away for the night. "Everybody has been saying 'What a sweet little thing you are.' There! before I'd be called *sweet!*"

The humming-bird felt crushed, but ventured a peep at the angry owl, who was sitting upright, staring at the moon.

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"They say you're so nice and sweet, and then they keep thinking to themselves, 'There's Dotty Dimple, she's horrid!' O, I know what they think. It puts me out of all patience."

"But your mamma *said* for you to be patient with me," murmured the humming-bird, half awake. "You're ten years old, and I'm only but just six; won't you please let me go to sleep?"

"Yes, go along to sleep. Only I'd as lief have Betty Bean at our party as not; but you went and made a great parade, as if I was ashamed of her clothes; and now everybody calls me so hateful."

"O, I didn't make a bit o' p'rade," cried Fly, springing up in bed; "you may ask my grandma if I did."

"*Your* grandma!" echoed the owl, resolved to make the humming-bird as misera-

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ble as she was herself. "*Your* grandma! S'pose you never mistrusted she's a great deal more *my* grandma than she is yours."

"No, I never. Who said so?"

"Didn't notice her name's Parlin, and my name's Parlin, but yours is nothing but Clifford?"

The humming-bird dropped her head for a moment, but soon revived.

"Well, that's cause my mamma is married to him; but her name *was* Ria Parlin when she was a little girl; so, there!"

"Yes, but my father's name was Edward Parlin, and he never changed it. Of course, grandma loves him better than she does your father, that's no relation to her, and a very homely man, too!"

"My papa isn't any homelier 'n yours," said poor Fly, struggling to keep the tears back.

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"Don't tell a wrong story, Fly Clifford. You know my father's very handsome."

"Well, so he is," sobbed truthful Fly; "but I guess I know *why* he's handsome. It's 'cause he's my own mother's own brother, — and *that's* why, Dotty Dimple!"

Dotty was silenced for a moment, but presently began again: —

"And everybody says my mother is the best woman in the city of Portland. Don't you wish your mother was half as good as mine?"

This was too much, and Fly, whose tenderest point was her love for her parents, cried out, at the top of her voice, —

"You stop talkin' so 'bout my father 'n mother; you stop it, Dotty Dimple! I've got a good *those*, if I haven't got anything thing else in this world!"

"Children, children, what are you scream-

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ing about? Do you mean to wake everybody up in the house?" said aunt Louise, rushing into their room, and closing the door.

"Aunty Weeze, aunty Weeze, come here, quick, and tell us which mother is the best!"

"Yes, auntie," chimed in the owl, shaking her horned head. "*Is* aunt Ria any better 'n my mother?"

"Isn't my mamma the be-*est?*" buzzed the humming-bird, fluttering up and down on the bed.

"Who's the best? Who's the best? Who, who?" hooted the owl.

"Hush, children; your mothers are both good. Lie down, and go to sleep."

"But, auntie, we can't sleep till we know which has the best mother."

"Yes, and Dotty quarrelled that *hers* was the best."

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"Well, I guess I've a right to quarrel the truth."

"O, auntie, auntie," wailed little Thistledown, "I want you to go right into my mamma's room, and ask her if she isn't as good as aunt Mary Parlin. O, dear! O, dear!"

It was laughable, and cryable, too.

"Dotty Dimple," said aunt Louise, severely, "you deserve to be punished for this; but as I am not your mother, I shall only tie up your mouth with a ribbon."

It was of no use pleading. When aunt Louise once said a thing, she was firm, and the knot in the ribbon was firm, too.

"M'—m'—m'—," gurgled Dotty.

"There, there, Dotty Dimple. Now you can't keep a saying—"

But, lo! there is sudden silence. A muzzle is put on Fly's mouth also. Both the humming-bird and the owl are tongue-tied.

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They bob their heads furiously for a while, then drop them heavily on the pillows, and there is quiet in the house of William Parlin, Esquire, of Willowbrook.

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CHAPTER XIII.

MAKING UP.

BOTH the birds overslept themselves next morning, and went down stairs, rather ashamed, to a late breakfast.

"It's daytime seven, not bedtime seven," said Fly, very pleasantly, for she held no ill will against her cousin; but Dotty answered never a word.

"There has been some disturbance between those children," said Grace to her mother, "and Dotty is turning up her nose."

Fly heard the remark, and said to Dotty, after breakfast, —

"I've been a-watching to see your nose go up. Grace said it did, but *my* nose won't go

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up athout I squeeze it with my finger — just this way. Did you *squoze yours*, Dotty Dimple?"

"Katie Clifford, you're *one* of the hatefullest children I ever saw, without *any* exception," said Miss Dimple, walking off, and leaving Fly gazing after her in mute surprise.

But Fly soon forgot Dotty's state of mind, and ran into the garden with a book, saying, —

"Here, here! spell this lesson to me, please."

Whereupon Dotty stalked away to play croquet by herself. Nimble Fly followed, and perched herself on the wickets, one after another, hoping to make her cousin laugh.

"I should like to have a little peace of my life, but it pleases you to chase me round; so no more to be said about it," exclaimed Miss Dimple, throwing down the mallet, and marching away to school.

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Her ill humor lasted for several days, and, when it was time to gather the oil-nuts, she put on her old gloves, saying to Grace, —

"You talk about me, so I shan't shake the trees for you; I shall pick. If you want anybody to shake, you'll have to send for Pete Grant."

This sad state of things was a great trial to little Thistledown.

"O, mamma, we never had so long a time of *disturbment* before," moaned she, wandering about with a sorrowful face. "I'm going to save my hangfiss to show aunt Mary how wet it is, and how Dotty makes me cry."

Mrs. Clifford had half a mind to let aunt Mary know of Dotty's behavior, that she might send for her to go home. But the unhappy child was coming to herself. Grandma found her one day writing a letter, with

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the tears dripping on the paper in a perfect shower.

"Why, what is it, dear?"

"Mother wanted me to write whether Fly and I got along well, and O, we do-o-n't," answered Dotty, who had just signed herself, "Your wicked little girl."

"And what is the reason you don't?"

"O, grandma, it's because I hate myself so. The more I think how cross I am, the crosser I grow."

Grandma smiled, but she knew there was some truth in Dotty's words.

"Fly is real troublesome sometimes, and plagues me; and then I keep trying to think, 'Well, she's as bad as I am.' But I know she isn't, grandma. She shakes it all off, and when I'm ever so hateful to her she forgets it next day. O, I wish I was sweet. O, I *wish* I was sweet."

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The child really needed comfort, and grandma, who pitied her for her unfortunate temper, put both arms around her, saying,—

"If you try to conquer your naughty feelings, dear, it is all we ask. Goodness isn't always sweetness, let me tell you."

"Do you mean pickled limes?" laughed Dotty, though she shook with sobs; "pickled limes are good, but they are bitter as fury."

"Well, no, I wasn't thinking of pickled limes; I was thinking of some of the best women I ever knew, who were not naturally amiable, any more than you are."

"Some of the *best* women, grandma?"

Dotty's heart began to feel lighter.

"Yes; for they had conquered their wicked tempers, and you will do the same; I have no doubt of it. If you only knew how you have improved within two years, Dotty!"

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"Improved! O, grandma, really and truly? But there, you wouldn't tell a wrong story. O, how happy, how happy I am!"

Peace was made that day between the two cousins, and Dotty dropped an old key upon the very spot beside the currant bushes where they had "solomon promidged" to have no more hard words. From this time Miss Thistledown began to think Miss Dimple not only the wisest girl in the world, but also the best.

Miss Whiting was married at grandpa's, became "Mrs. Polly Jonathan Blacker," though the girls called her only "Mrs. Polly," and went to live in the pretty cottage near aunt Martha Adams; but still Ruth did not make her wedding dress.

Winter came; and Mr. Clifford, Horace, uncle Edward, aunt Mary, aunt Madge, uncle 'Gustus, Susy, Prudy, and all, met at Wil-

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lowbrook, to spend Christmas together. Mr. Clifford was delighted to see his little daughter so strong, and stout, and rosy. There is a plant called "Blessed Thistle," and that was his name for her sometimes.

"Well, why do you eye me so sharply, Blessed Thistle? What do you find so odd about me?" said he, as her delicate fingers travelled over every part of his face.

"Well, I don't care if you *are* homely, papa," replied she, somewhat embarrassed; "'cause mamma 'spises pretty men."

Dotty ran out of the room, afraid Fly would tell where she had learned that papa was homely.

These were great times for sliding, and Fly, with her quickly-dancing blood, could bear the cold even longer than Dotty Dimple. One afternoon, at five o'clock, when the bell was rung for them to come in, Fly rushed

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through the house, out of breath, exclaiming, —

"O, Hollis, go ask mamma if I mayn't slide some more. Why, the sun's *just* as bright! Hasn't gone down a speck since noon!"

As Horace only laughed, she flew up stairs to her mother, but found her in bed with headache.

"O, my dear mamma, why didn't you send for me to *poor* your head?" said Fly, flinging her hood, cloak, and mittens on the floor.

There never was a little creature so full of sympathy for the sick. She began at once to play the nurse; and really, her soft touch was very soothing, till she happened to see a fly alighting on poor mamma's forehead, when she brought down her little hand with a sudden blow which made Mrs. Clifford cry out in pain.

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"O, dear, dear, dear! I didn't *mean* to 'sturb you, mamma," said Thistledown, in such dismay that the sufferer laughed, and sent her down stairs to ask Horace what news he had in his letter.

"Well, it is from Percy Eastman," said Horace; "and he sends a kiss to his little wifie. By the way, where's that kiss I gave you this morning, Topknot?"

"You gave it to me to *keep*," said the mischief, drawing her lips together. "Shan't let you have a single which one for *that* horrible boy."

"Fie, Topknot. What has he ever done, that you should call him horrible?"

"She doesn't like to be rushed upon and kissed," said Dotty, speaking for her. "Percy is a great, rough boy."

"'Sides, some folks haven't any common senses," said Fly. "Telling fibs 'bout their aunt Bumpus!"

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"O, yes, 'twas a fearful thing, that Bumpus story; but if I see Percy to-morrow —"

"O, Hollis, Hollis, don't you go off with that horrible boy, and leave your little sister," pleaded the child, laying her cheek against his.

"But, Topknot, haven't I told you I must kill a deer before I die?"

"Must you, honest? What for? Wish't you'd give it some *clodyform* 'fore you kill it. Won't you please to?"

Mr. Clifford smiled over the book he was reading, thinking the deer would not need any chloroform, for Horace was not likely to hurt them, or even to see them at all.

"What is a deer, Hollis?"

"There are two kinds, ma'am. One has fluffy hair and dove's eyes —"

"O, ho! that's me!"

"And the other, — why, you've seen deer

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in Central Park; they look like 'bossy-cats.'"

"O, I don't say 'bossy-cats' now. I say *calfs!*"

"And I'm going to bring home that kind of deer for you to eat."

"Don't want you to, Hollis. I've got enough to eat. Wish't you'd stay here with me," said Fly, hiding her face on his shoulder. "I don't want you to freeze all up in the snow, and never come home any more."

"But if I do freeze up, you'll come and dig me out — won't you, Topknot?"

The little one shuddered, and dropped her head under his arm in the frightened way she had sometimes.

"Don't talk so, Hollis. If you freeze up in the snow, you'll be a *skallywag*."

"Be a what, Topknot?"

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"A *skallywag*," repeated she, with a grieved lip; "something that's all bones."

"She means a *skeleton*. Do you hear, father? Topknot means a skeleton."

"Well, what makes you always laugh when I talk about *heaven?*" said Fly, opening and closing her eyelids solemnly.

That night, after she went to bed, her father heard her crying, and went in to ask what was the matter. She had been thinking how dreadful it would be if somebody had to dig Horace out of the snow; and then again how beautiful it would be for him to go up to heaven to see brother Harry.

"I don't know 'zacly what I'm cryin 'bout, papa. Guess I want to see my brother Harry, that has gone to God."

"Why, blessed Thistle, you don't know anything about him. He died before you were born."

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"Well, papa, that's why I want to see him; 'cause I never did see him, you know," sobbed the little girl, who had really made herself believe she was grieving for Harry.

But brother Horace happened to think what the trouble might be, and went in to talk with her.

"Did Percy tell you we were going to sleep out of doors?"

"O, yes, I've known that for quite a long time."

"Well, there isn't a word of truth in it, Topknot, any more than there is in aunt Bumpus. We shall sleep in Mr. Prince's logging-camp."

"Serious truly, black and bluely? O, what a tormentable boy!"

"Yes, it is a house made of logs and slabs, with a sharp roof — like your money-box."

"Will you have any fire?" asked the little care-taker, anxiously.

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"Yes, a great roaring fire in the middle of the camp, and the smoke goes out through a hole in the roof."

"Will you have a bed?"

"Yes, a long, long bed, made of cedar boughs, with a long, long quilt; for all the men, and the "tormentable boy," and I will sleep together, with our feet towards the fire."

"What will you have for breakfast?" asked the child, beginning to feel comforted.

"Pork and beans, and hot biscuits and molasses."

"Do they keep the deers in the camp?"

Her eyes were closing now.

"No; we go after them, with long, long snow-shoes on, almost as big as this pillow."

"Poor little deers. Tell some more."

"Well, in the winter, the father and mother deer, and their children, have a home by

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themselves in the woods, and it is called a deer-yard. There are five or six in one family.

'Me wish my finger was a gun,
Me shoot the mooses as they run,'"

chanted Horace; and then stopped. For Fly was fast asleep.

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CHAPTER XIV.

HUNTING DEER.

It was extremely cold next morning, and Mrs. Clifford, though a brave woman, shuddered at the thought of letting her boy go into the wilderness; but, as his father approved, she kept her thoughts to herself. Horace ate a hearty breakfast of buckwheat cakes and sausages, slung his shawl-strap over his back, kissed everybody, shouldered his rifle, put on three pairs of mittens, and mounted the stage, calling out, —

"In just a week from to-day you'll be broiling venison. So have your coals hot."

Fly wanted the very last glimpse of the stage, and felt it a sore grief when aunt

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Louise bade her go up stairs after a book; for when she got back to the window, it was too late to see anything but the empty white street the stage had passed through.

Horace took the cars for Bangor, where he met Percy, and then they both went a long way by stage to Mr. Prince's logging-camp. It was so very cold, that Percy repented of having started, but dared not say so to Horace, who was eager for hunting, and would have thought him a baby.

The "long bed" was not very clean, but it was warm, and they slept so well that when the cook called them up to breakfast at six, they felt as if it was the middle of the night, and it did not seem very amusing to hunt day after day, and find no deer. On the fourth day, they saw some tracks, and knew they had come upon a deer-yard.

"But I'll warrant the deer have run away," said Percy. "Just our luck."

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"We can find out whether they have run away," answered Horace, "by watching the tracks, to see if they strike off into the woods. Let's walk in a circle right round this spot."

"Agreed," said Percy. "You go east, and I'll go west, and we'll meet in the middle."

There did not appear to be any danger of getting lost, for each of the youths had a compass. Horace's was on his watch chain, — a little charm given him by Fly.

"Well, good by, old fellow," said he to Percy. "It's ten o'clock; we'll meet again at noon, and eat our doughnuts together."

So they parted, and Horace went east, and Percy went west. It was the coldest day they had known yet. Horace's mittened hands looked like a pair of sofa-cushions, and he walked with about as much grace as a mud-turtle; for the snow-shoes were clumsy,

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and every time he took up his foot he seemed to drag a basketful of chips after it. He kept looking off into the distant woods for deer tracks, till the bright sun almost blinded his eyes, but there were no tracks to be seen.

"Here it is, twelve o'clock," said he. "Hillo, Percy, where are you?"

There was no answer, but a tall mountain seemed to spring up like a jack-in-the-box, and stare at him.

"I certainly never saw that mountain before," thought Horace, in surprise. "Can I have lost the way? Of course not, for I have followed my compass."

Very well; but was he quite sure his compass was true? He examined it anxiously, and found the needle wavered. It had been made for a toy, and not for any real use.

Ah, it was a serious thing to find himself alone in the woods, with no guide. He was a lost boy!

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"Well, I won't stop yet to think how bad it is. I'll eat my lunch first."

He sat down in a snow-bank, ate two large biscuits and three doughnuts, looked about him at the cold, desolate forest, and sprang up, exclaiming, —

"Now for it, old fellow. You've got to fight for your life, and do it by guess-work, too."

He "guessed" it was as well to "wheel about face," and did so.

"What, what!" said he, when he had tramped for an hour; "here's that everlasting mountain again! I declare, if I haven't got back to the very place I started from."

He was growing very tired, but dared not stop, for fear of freezing to death.

"If the dark overtakes me here, I'm a dead man. O, God! All I ask is to find a wood-road, no matter where it leads."

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He knew there was not a dwelling-house within fifty miles; but there were logging-camps, and every camp had a wood-road.

"The wind howls like wolves. 'If you freeze up in the snow, Hollis, you'll be a *skallywag!*'" Precious darling! Her words came back with the very feeling of her soft cheek pressed against his.

"Bless her! If I shouldn't get back, it would break her little heart. Wonder how long she'd remember me! Wonder what father would do! No use, you see, to come here to hunt me up next week! No use to come to-morrow! Percy'll do all he can, but he won't know where to look."

The sun was fast going down, and the chill of despair began to creep over Horace, when he suddenly remembered the fire in his grandfather's roof last summer. "God sent me to put that out. He can save me now, if he

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will." And again he cried to him for help. "There's nothing makes a fellow pray so hard as a good scare. I ought to be ashamed of it, but I haven't prayed like this since Peter Grant and I got lost in the woods, ten years ago," said he, tramping on, and on, and on.

In all his life he had never been so tired before, and the snow-shoes felt like mill-stones tied to his feet. The sun dropped behind the western hills; night was coming on, lonely, still, bitter cold.

"But I won't die while there's any chance of living," cried the brave young wanderer; "I do believe the Lord means to help me yet."

Look! What did he see a little to the right? There was an opening among the trees, and the snow looked as if it had been trodden.

"Glory, hallelujah! A road, a road!"

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shouted Horace, to the white hills and the bare trees.

There was a new feeling in his heart now towards his heavenly Father.

> "Something more sacred than a fear,
> More tender than a love."

He thought he should never forget it, and this happy escape would surely make him a better boy. The wind no longer howled; it seemed to sing for joy; the snow-shoes were no longer heavy; but he did not need them in the road, and when he took them off he seemed to be flying. It was a long way, but he did not mind it. He was going to a strange camp; but what of that? He had got there. Hurrah! He was safe.

The men had rough beards, and uncut hair, but they all looked like angels. They came out and greeted him, each one, as if he was a dear son they had not seen for a year.

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"The first fellow we've set eyes on since we've been in camp," said they, dragging him in, and shaking him, to see whether he was dead or alive.

"Very much alive, indeed; only a little tired," said Horace. And while he ate supper he told of his wanderings.

They begged him to stay a week, but he would not even spend the night. Mr. Prince's logging-camp was only five miles away, and he must go there before he slept.

Percy, and all Mr. Prince's men, met him with a joyful welcome, for they had all been greatly alarmed.

"I made up my mind," said Percy, "that if you got back alive, we'd start for home to-morrow, deer or no deer. There's no fun in this."

"None of your backing out," said Horace, partly raising himself from the "long bed,"

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where he was lying, with his feet towards the fire; "I'm not going home till the time is up, my boy, and I'm bound to shoot a deer before I go."

"That's good pluck," said one lumberman, smiling at another. "Jones and I came across a deer-yard this afternoon, and we'll put you in the way to find it."

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CHAPTER XV.

THE PARLIN PATCHWORK.

MEANWHILE, at home, Mrs. Polly Jonathan Blacker, and "her husband, too," as Fly said, were preparing to have a party on the very night Horace was expected home.

It was so odd to think of Mrs. Polly's having company! To be sure, she had invited only the young Parlins and Cliffords, and grandma sent nearly all the supper; but Mrs. Blacker had never had the care of even a chicken in her life, and the party weighed upon her mind.

"Jonathan," said she, anxiously, "would you go to Mrs. Adams for dishes, or would you rather borrow of Mrs. Gordon?"

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They had been so extravagant as to buy half a dozen cups and saucers, knives, forks, and plates, when they went to housekeeping, because Jonathan was fond of company; but this was to be a great party, and they needed more.

"Well, it doesn't make a grain of difference which, as I know of," replied easy Jonathan.

So Polly had to decide for herself, and it took her half an hour. Then she put on her shawl, pinned it three times, and went to see Mrs. Adams. It took three quarters of an hour to explain everything, borrow the dishes, and ask advice as to which preserves she should use — the peaches Mrs. Parlin had given her last fall, or the currant jam Mrs. Gordon had sent her in on her wedding-day.

Aunt Martha Adams settled the question by taking down from her closet shelf a jar of

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delicious-looking pears, which rejoiced even the bride's troubled heart.

Polly spent all the morning dusting her pretty new house, and setting the rugs straight. Jonathan helped her get an early dinner, that she might have time to clear away, and put on her best black dress and "cappee."

"Now, Polly," said he, after they had eaten, "it's too bad for you to beat yourself all out washing these dishes. Give me your apron, and go lay down on the sofa."

Polly looked gratefully and admiringly at his dimpled face, fringed with bright red whiskers.

"It is a great thing to have a husband that can take right hold and help. But there's one thing you can't do, Jonathan; you can't roll the care off my mind," sighed she, going to lie down in the little bed-room that opened out of the parlor.

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"Gayly the troubadour," sang Jonathan, through his nose, while he rubbed the dishes as hard as he could, and cracked a teacup in his efforts to help his wife. He loved her dearly, though he knew, as well as anybody, that she made a foolish ado about trifles.

"I wish I had had the care of her when she was little," thought he; "I would have broken her of it."

"O, Miss Polly, *Mrs.* Polly, how nice it is here!" said the girls, when they came.

Nothing could be pleasanter than the little parlor, and the bright tea-table, that stood in the middle of the room, waiting for Horace. He arrived, at last, very triumphant, drawing upon a sled his "dearest deer," — a pretty little fawn-colored creature, with tiny horns. You may fancy the shouting and laughing, for no one had supposed the young hunter would see even the track of a deer.

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"Did *he* get one, too?" asked Fly, not deigning to speak Percy's name.

And when Horace answered "No," she looked proud, and said, —

"I knew you'd beat him all to nuffin."

Then they sat down to supper, and Horace thought he would wait till another time before telling of his narrow escape in the woods. There were tiny cream biscuits, butter with a cowslip stamp, cold ham, damson tarts, and plenty of Jersey cream.

Polly enjoyed pouring tea at her own table for the young folks she loved so well, and smiled several times, in spite of the "darting pain in her side."

After supper was over, and Mr. Blacker had sung a few songs, he went to the post office, and then his wife took the girls and Horace into the bed-room, to see the patchwork quilt.

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"I call it my Parlin bed-quilt," said she; "for there isn't a scrap or a scrid in it but that came from your grandfather's."

"Why, Horace," said Grace, looking closely, "here are some pieces of my blue merino."

Polly patted the squares lovingly.

"Yes, bless your heart! You wore it the summer you came east, with the baby that died; and I never saw a prettier creature than you were, with those red curls dangling in your neck."

"O, don't say red."

"Well, your hair is dark enough now, and prettier, if anything, than it was then. But," added Polly, sighing, "what a summer that was for your mother!"

"Look here, Grace," said Susy, "here is a piece of the scarlet poplin aunt Eastman gave me, the next winter after the fire. It was a beauty, but I never liked to have Per-

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cy see me wear it, for he called me a flamingo."

"And here," said Polly, pointing to some blue all-wool delaine, spotted with sprigs of white clover, "here is the dress Prudy had on when she tried to go up to heaven on a ladder. It was a wonder she didn't break her little neck. It makes the cold shivers creep over me now when I think of it."

Dotty had been trying to make everybody look at her pieces.

"Don't you remember, Susy, how much I used to think of that white thibet with red dots? I wore it at your party, ever so many years ago, that time Johnny Eastman frightened me so with a jack-o'-lantern pumpkin."

"And here is a piece of your pink wrapper, that you had on when you got lost in the snow with Tate Penny," said Prudy.

"O, yes; and what cunning little pockets

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it had! And how I used to put in pop corn, and sprinkle it with salt," said Dotty, her eyes shining. "Didn't Tate and I have times? She isn't much like Jenny Vance, now I can tell you. But what's this little beauty dress? I know I've seen it before."

"That is the one Katie had on when I went to keep house for your grandmother," said Polly. She had kept house there one day and night.

"Yes," said Dotty; "and how Fly was real sick, and we got up in the pitch dark, and thought it was morning. But the sun didn't rise, and I was afraid the world was coming to an end — I really was. Do you remember how I followed you out to the barn to see you milk, Miss Polly — *Mrs.* Polly?"

"Yes, but I never mistrusted what ailed you. You did look very sober."

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"Well, and so did you. And you sang one of the dreadfulest hymns, that frightened me more than ever, only I durstn't say so; that one about the world's burning up."

"He reigns above, He reigns alone,
Systems burn out, and leave His throne,"

struck up Mrs. Blacker, in her melancholy voice, which had not changed in the least, except that it hissed and buzzed over the letter *s*, because her teeth were not quite firm in her mouth.

"O, yes, that was it," said Dotty, clapping her hands. "I remember just how the drops of milk sounded, as they fell into the pail. O, it was awful!"

"And me sick, too," put in Fly.

"Yes, and the beer bottles popped off fizz-bang in the cellar, and Miss Polly thought it was somebody shooting the pork barrels,"

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said Dotty, rocking back and forth in a tempest of laughter. But Mrs. Blacker only said, gravely, —

"Dotty, you did a strange thing yourself; you put the best tea-pot on the stove empty, and melted it all down."

Polly was ashamed to think of her own foolish behavior on that strange night, and was glad her husband was not present to hear Dotty tell about thieves "shooting the pork barrel."

"Well, as I was saying in the first place, this is the very dress Katie had on that day when she got into the watering-trough, and tried to swim."

"Look here, haven't you any pieces of my clothes?" said Horace. "I feel slighted."

"That sounds just like you. Deary me! You were queer-acting children, from oldest to youngest, and needed one hand to look

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after you; but, somehow, I never could help liking the Parlins and Cliffords."

"Thank you," said Grace.

"And now, to think you are all growing up so fast! I declare, it does make me feel bad," sighed Mrs. Polly, trying her best to find a dark side to the picture. Then she turned down the lamp a little, and lighted the girls out of the pretty bed-room; but they all looked bright and happy, as if the thought of growing up did not sadden them in the least. And thus ended Mrs. Polly's party.

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